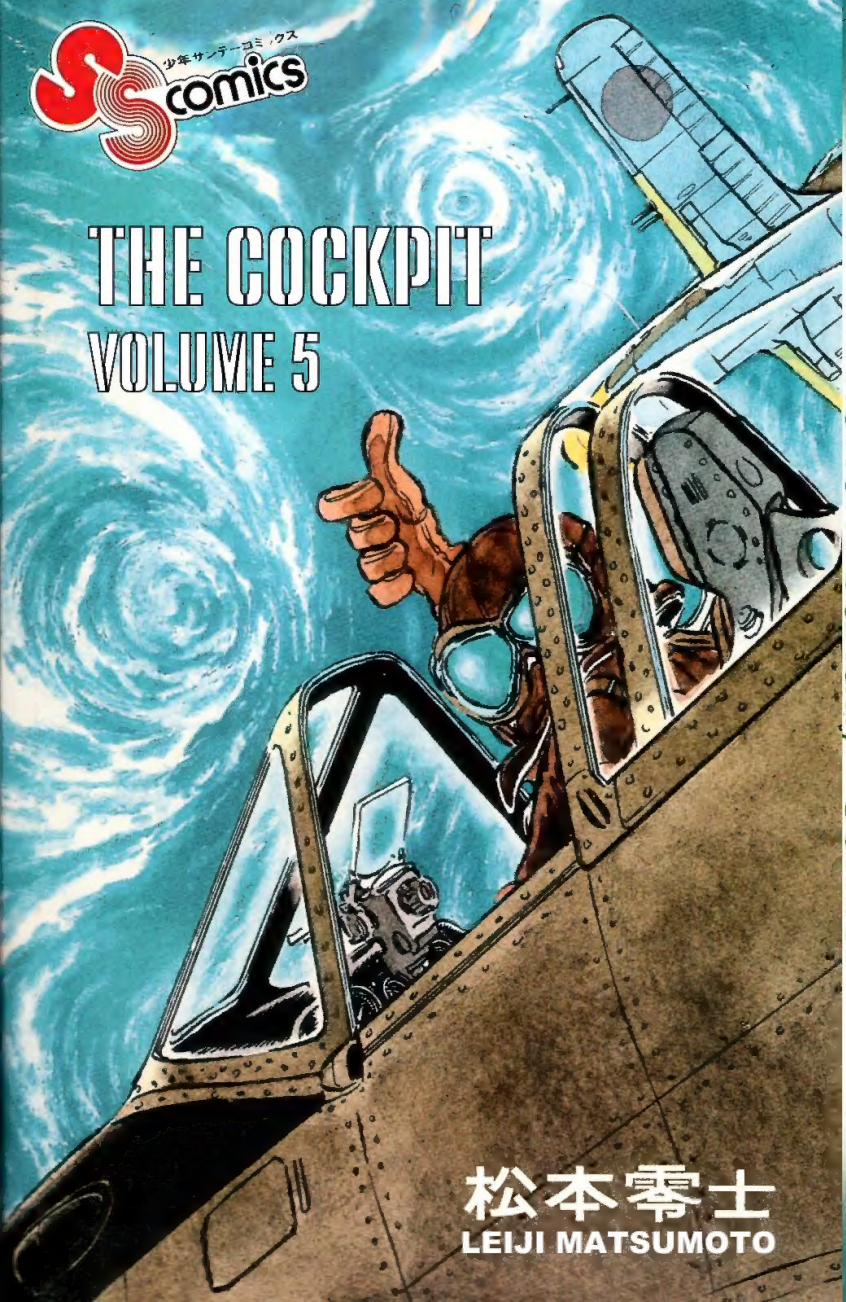

少年サンデーコミックス
SS comics
THE COCKPIT
VOLUME 5
Shonen Sunday Comics
松本零士
LEIJI MATSUMOTO

NOTICE!

Japanese comics or *manga* are read from right to left across the page instead of left to right. Also, if your reader supports Japanese *manga* format (back to front instead of front to back) then set it so for easier reading. Thanks!

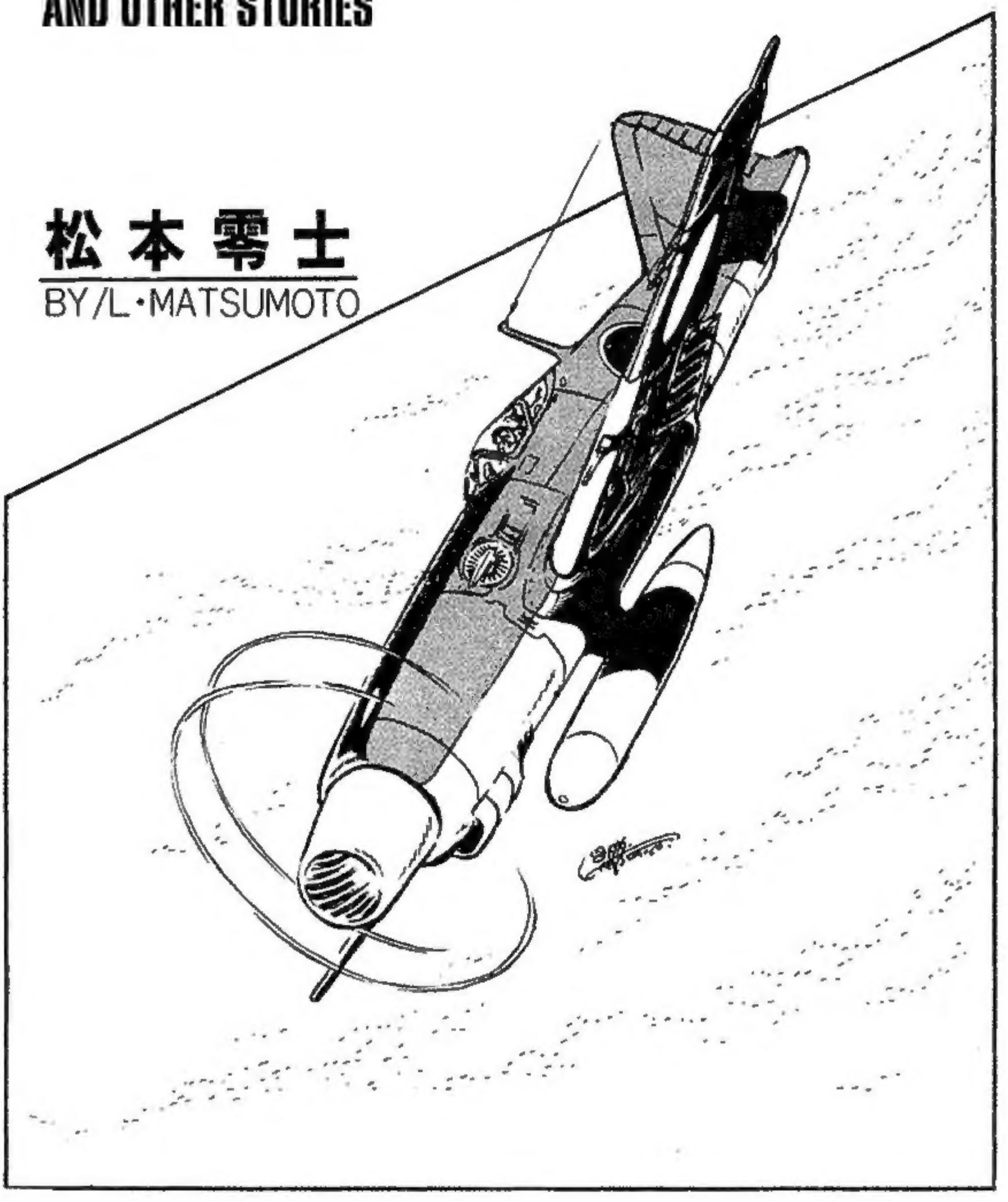
THE COCKPIT

VOLUME 5

IMPACT ANGLE 90 DEGREES

AND OTHER STORIES

松本零士
BY/L・MATSUMOTO



THE COCKPIT (aka BATTLEFIELD) Volume 5: Impact at 90 Degrees and other stories

by Leiji Matsumoto

A Google Translate ® adaptation

English language cleanup
by Richard Mandel

Released in 2026 by fans for fans
No infringement intended or implied

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■松本零士■
LEIJI MATSUMOTO

EDITOR'S NOTE

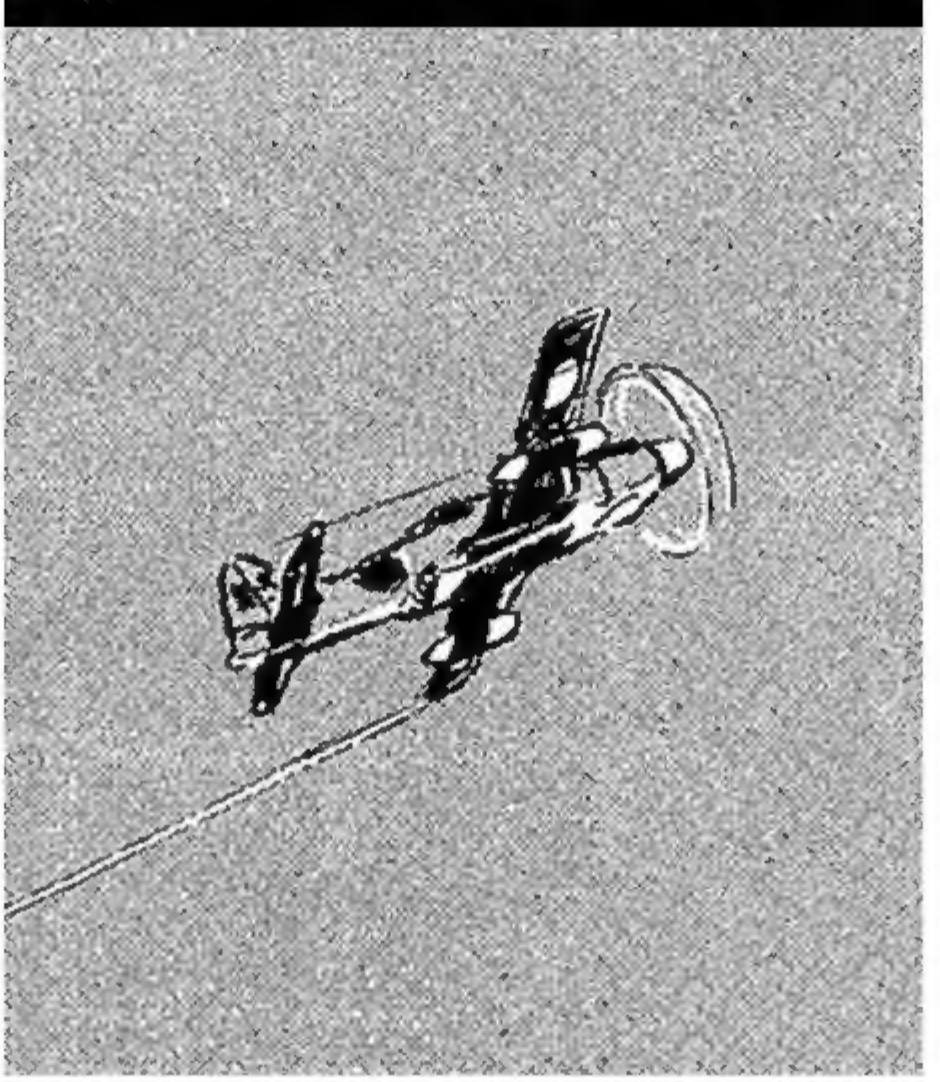
This manga was "scanlated" from the original Japanese by feeding the individual pages through the free Google Translate AI program and then the results cleaned up considerably for better reading by English speaking audiences. Google Translate AI is a far from perfect tool as I write this (2026) but as I said it was free and you can't beat that with a stick. The end results were barely readable and I've had to both rewrite and interpolate considerably in places in order to produce an English adaptation that reads well.

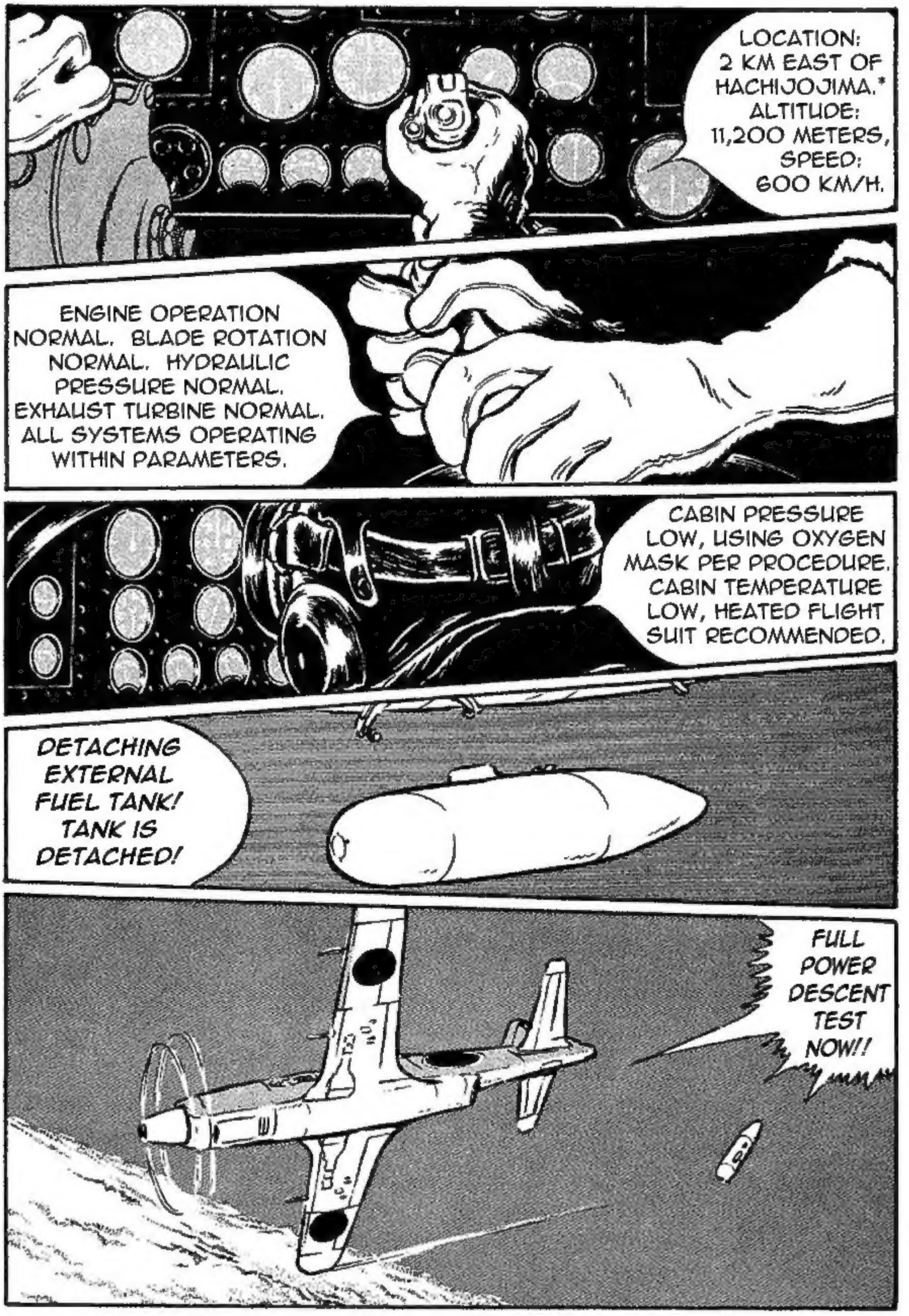
My apologies to all of you who know the language. All I can say is that the rest of us have waited this long for some kind (*any* kind) of English language adaptation of this classic Leiji Matsumoto manga. If you can and are willing to do better then by all means feel free to do so. I won't be offended. I'll enjoy your effort with everyone else who reads it. (R.M.)

These are stories of men, women, and the machines of war.

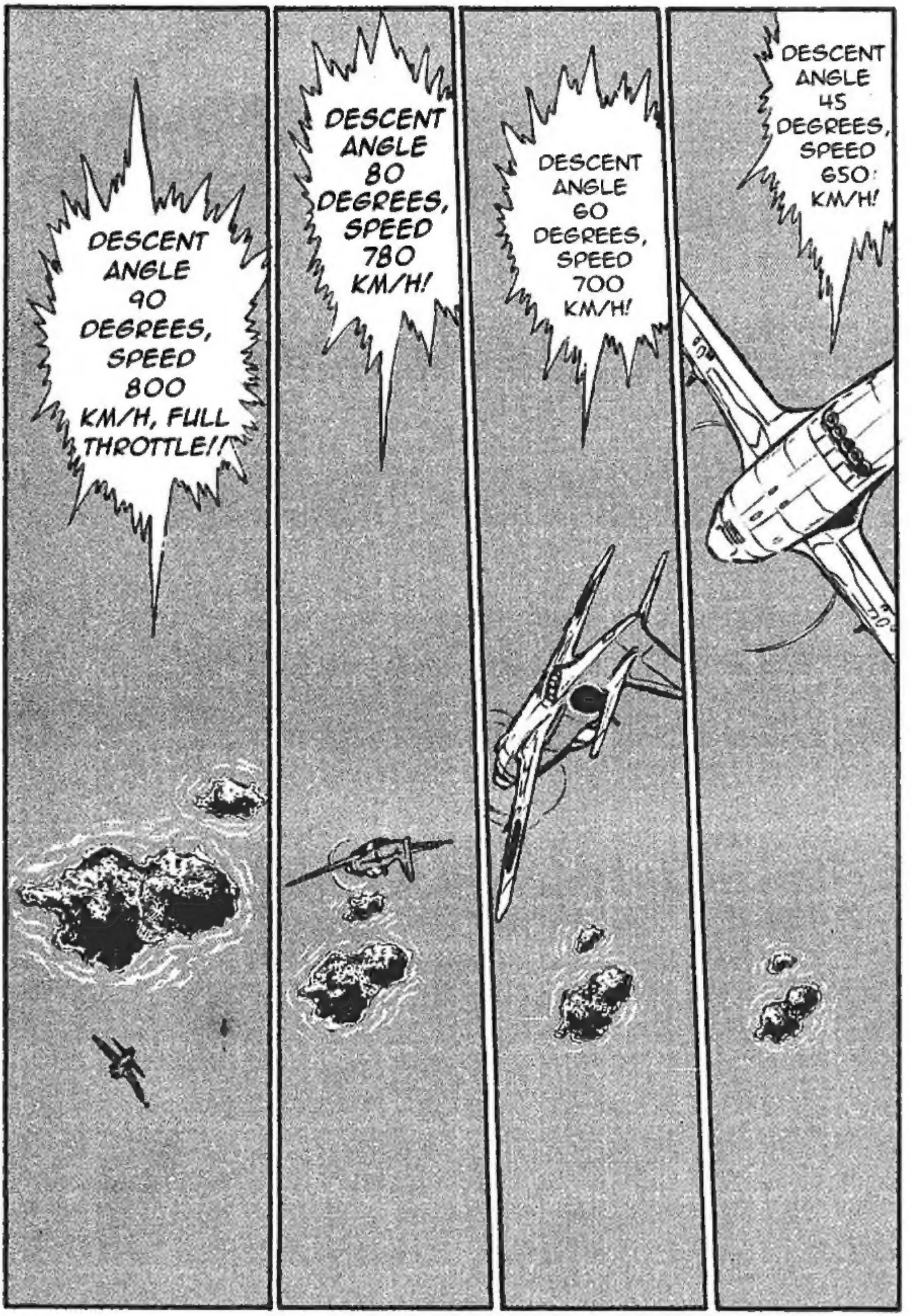
TALES FROM THE COCKPIT

IMPACT ANGLE 90 DEGREES





5 (*) HACHIJOJIMA – ONE OF JAPAN'S MAJOR TOURIST RESORTS TODAY, THIS VOLCANIC ISLAND IS LOCATED ABOUT 287 KM SOUTH OF TOKYO BAY. IN WORLD WAR II IT WAS KNOWN AS THE "IRON MOUNTAIN." IT WAS HEAVILY FORTIFIED AND HOUSED A NUMBER OF STRATEGIC MILITARY INSTALLATIONS.


DESCENT ANGLE 90 DEGREES, SPEED 800 KM/H, FULL THROTTLE!!
DESCENT ANGLE 80 DEGREES, SPEED 780 KM/H!
DESCENT ANGLE 60 DEGREES, SPEED 700 KM/H!
DESCENT ANGLE 45 DEGREES, SPEED 650 KM/H!

IMPACT ANGLE 90 DEGREES

OIL AND HYD-RAU-LIC LINES GONE!

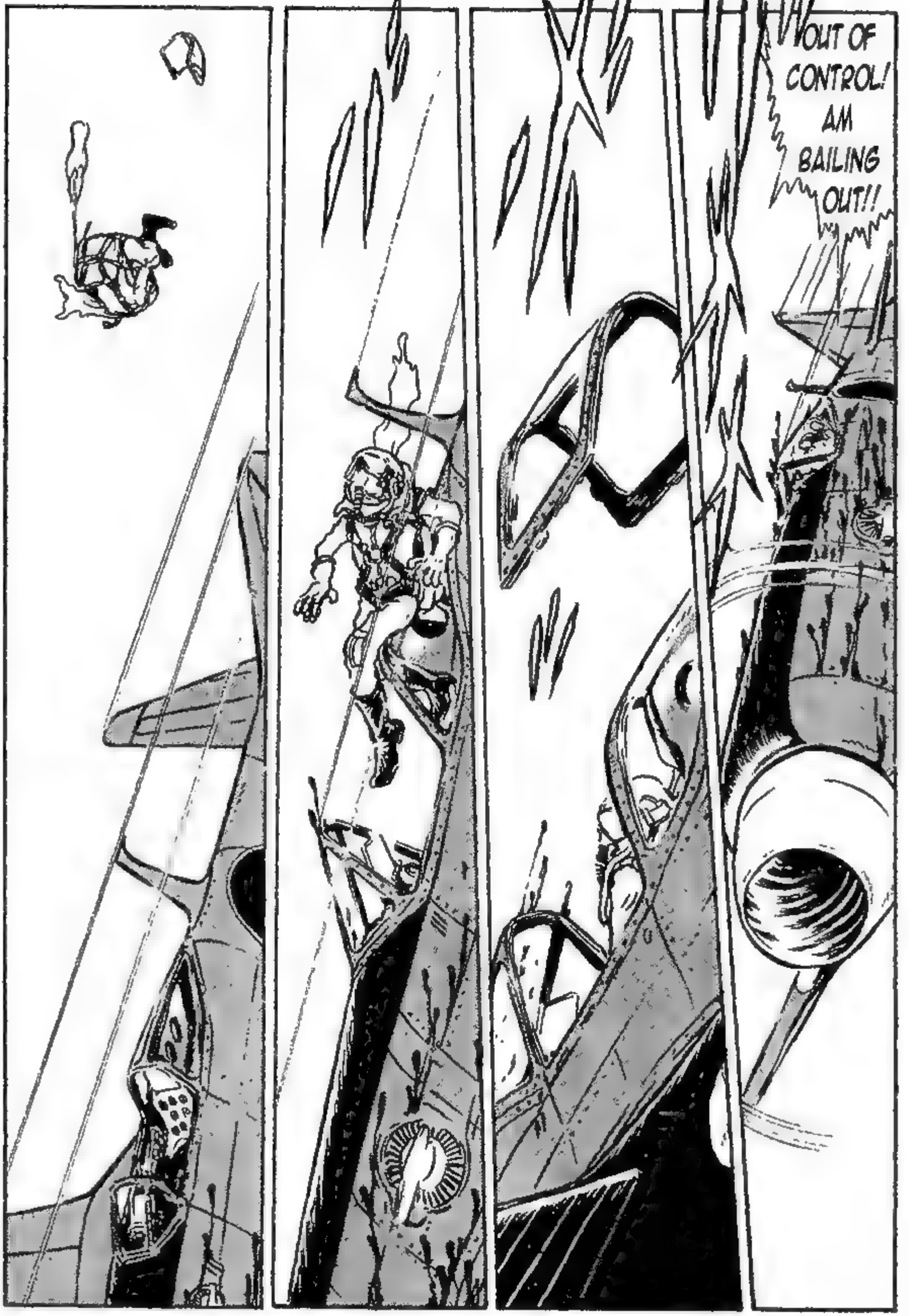
BECOMING HARD TO CONTROL! WHOLE PLANE IS SHAKING!!

AILERONS MALFUN-CTIONING! WINGTIP FLUTTER BECOMING VIOLENT!!

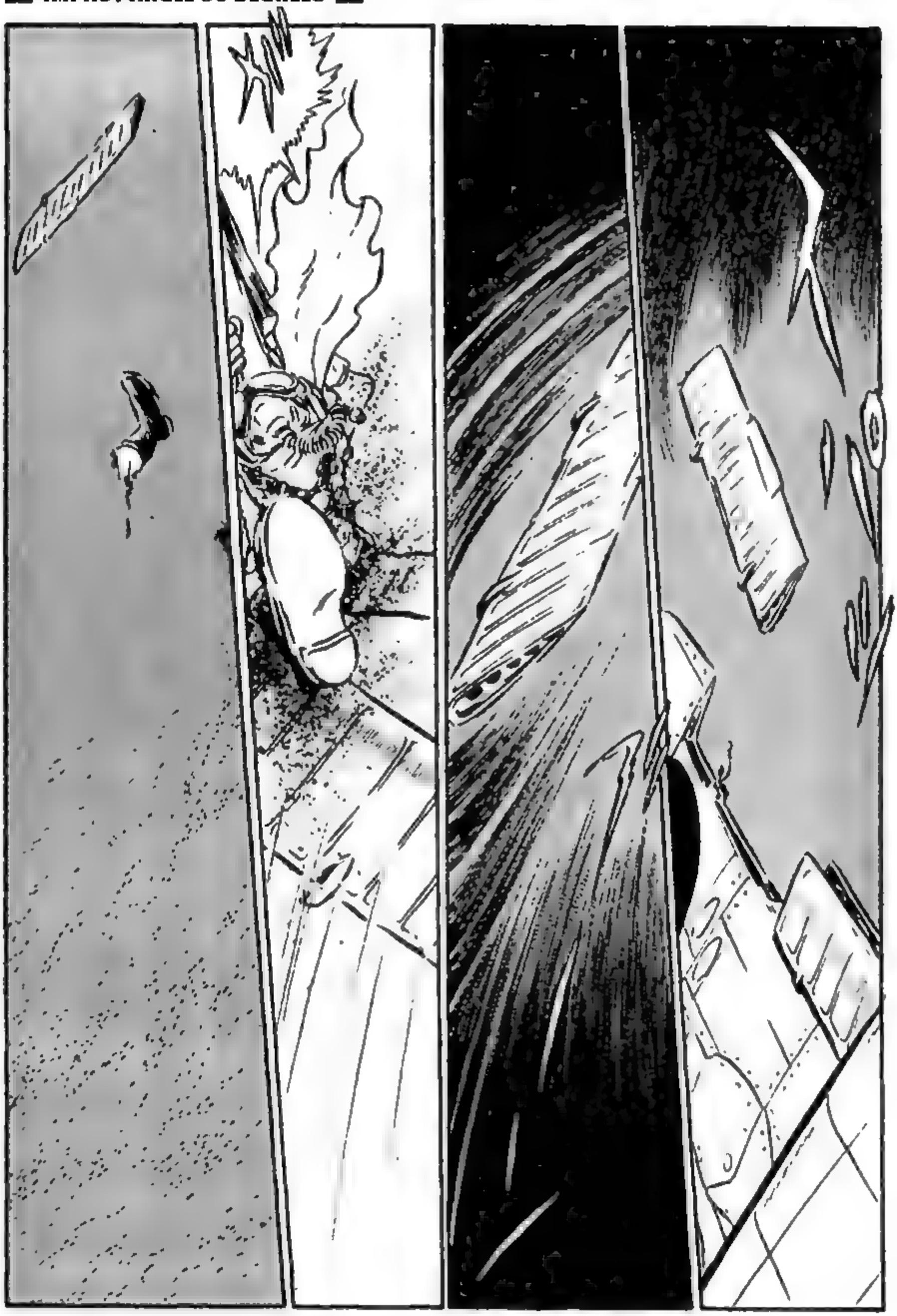
900!

910!

920!


OUT OF CONTROL! AM BAILING OUT!!

IMPACT ANGLE 90 DEGREES



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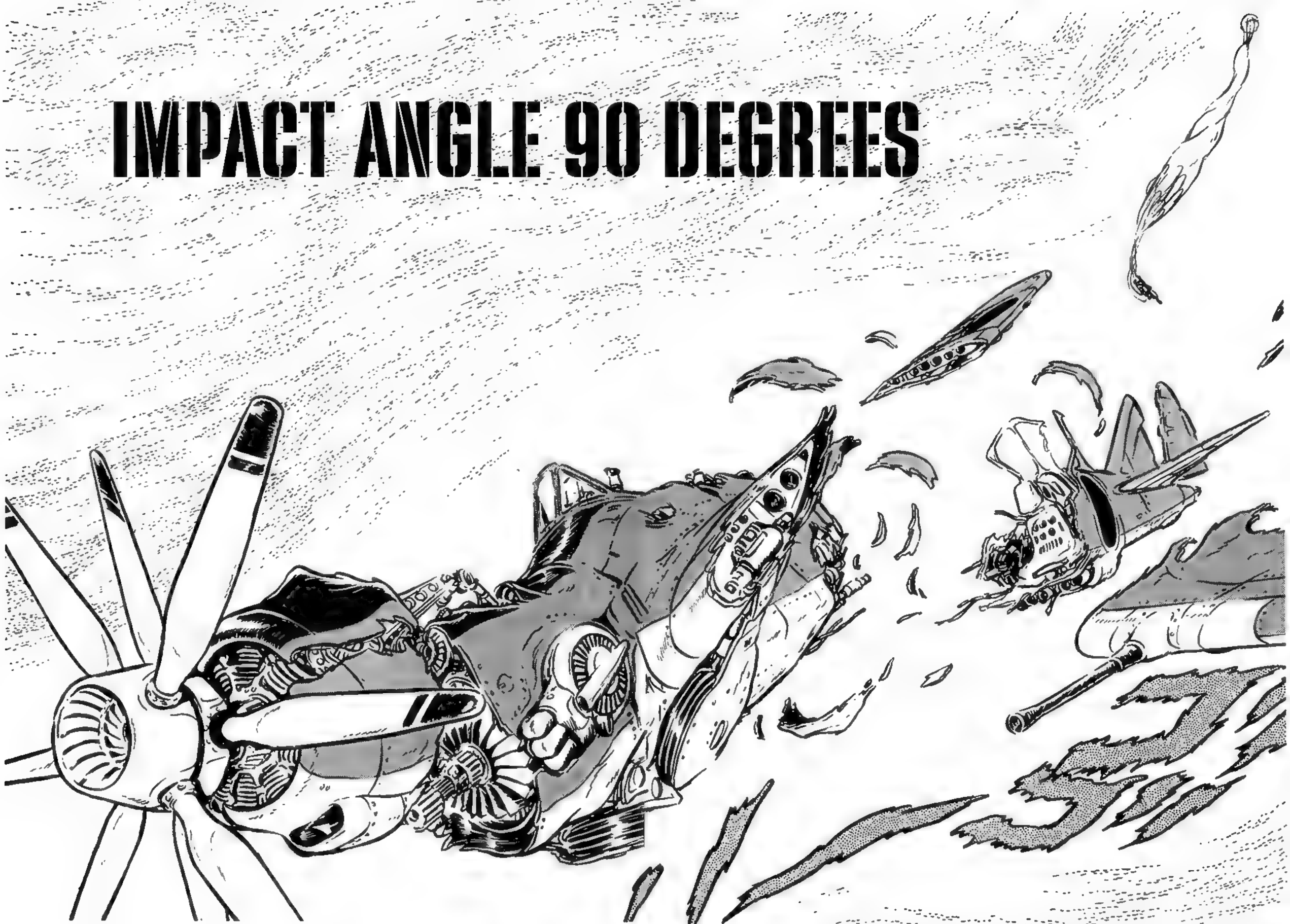


AAH!!

WARM!

WARM MY RIGHT FOOT! PLEASE!!

IT'S FREEZING!

WILL SOMEBODY LIGHT A FIRE? MY RIGHT FOOT IS FREEZING!

SO COLD ...

MY RIGHT FOOT ...

SO COLD ...

DAIBA? AH, YOU'RE AWAKE! IT'S ME, YAMA-KOSHI!

WHERE ... AND HOW?

YOU BAILED OUT OF YOUR PLANE RIGHT BEFORE IT BROKE UP. ONCE YOU LANDED, THEY RUSHED YOU HERE TO THE HYUGO HOSPITAL.

AND MY PLANE? WHAT HAPPENED TO IT?

IT'S A TOTAL LOSS. NOT MUCH LEFT. I'M SORRY.

GOD DAMN IT!

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. DON'T BLAME YOURSELF. PROBABLY ANOTHER ENGINE DEFECT OR SOMETHING.

I'VE GOT TO--

DAIBA!

MY RIGHT FOOT!

I DON'T HAVE A RIGHT FOOT ANYMORE! HOW?!?

IT'S GONE! MY RIGHT FOOT IS GONE!!

NO ... NO IT ISN'T.

I'M SO SORRY, DAIBA. THAT'S MY FAULT.

PART OF YOUR PLANE HIT YOU AS YOU WERE COMING DOWN AND CHOPPED OFF YOUR RIGHT FOOT.

LOOK, YOU REST AND TAKE IT EASY, OKAY? I'LL GET SOMEONE ELSE FOR UNIT 2.

THAT'S PART OF THE JOB OF BEING A TEST PILOT. SOMETIMES YOU'RE NOT SO LUCKY.

I KNEW SOMETHING LIKE THIS MIGHT HAPPEN SOMEDAY.

I SEE THE AMERICANS ARE BACK. THEY'RE BOMBING THE FACTORY AREA AGAIN.
WE DON'T HAVE ANY OPERATIONAL PLANES THAT CAN OUTPERFORM THEIR FIGHTERS, IN PARTICULAR THE P-51D MUSTANG.
YEAH. THEY'RE BACK AND WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME.
IT CAN ALSO ZIP AROUND LIKE A MOSQUITO AT THAT SPEED. THAT'S WHAT WE'VE GOT TO BEAT.
IT CAN DO 710 KILOMETERS AN HOUR.
TO DO THAT WE'RE TRYING TO MAKE THE WORLD'S FIRST SUPERSONIC PROP-DRIVEN AIRCRAFT, AND NO ONE'S BEEN ABLE TO DO THAT SO FAR.
I MEAN, THAT'S WHAT THIS WHOLE PROJECT IS ABOUT, RIGHT?
AND YET THERE ARE AIRCRAFT FLYING TODAY THAT CAN EXCEED THE SPEED OF SOUND. JET AND ROCKET PLANES, OF COURSE.
THERE'S THAT 1,224 KM/H THEORETICAL LIMIT PLUS THE STRESS LIMITS OF A PROP-DRIVEN AIRFRAME.
... BUT IT'S NOT GOING TO BE FINISHED IN TIME. THERE'S GOT TO BE ANOTHER WAY ....
THE GERMANS WITH THEIR ME-163 KOMET DID IT FIRST. WE HAVE THEIR PLANS AND ARE DOING OUR OWN ...

WE ALSO HAVE THEIR PLANS FOR THE ME-262. THAT WON'T BE READY IN TIME EITHER. THERE HAS *GOT* TO BE ANOTHER WAY!

THEN AGAIN, WHAT DO I KNOW?

I KNOW PISTON AND RADIAL AIRCRAFT ENGINES LIKE THE BACK OF MY HAND. I SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO THIS! THERE MUST BE A WAY AROUND CURRENT LIMITS!

... ...

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT I'VE OVERLOOKED? ANYTHING AT ALL, NO MATTER HOW SEEMINGLY INSIGNIFICANT?

I'VE THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING I KNOW IN DEALING WITH HIGH SPEED STRESS ....

IF A JET OR ROCKET PLANE CAN BREAK THE SOUND BARRIER, THEN IN THEORY A PROP-DRIVEN PLANE CAN TOO. I'VE JUST GOT TO DESIGN THE RIGHT AIRFRAME AND GET OR MAKE THE RIGHT ENGINE FOR IT!

YAMAKOSHI, YOU AND I'VE BEEN FLYING AND DESIGNING PLANES SINCE THE BOTH OF US WERE KIDS.

IF ANYONE CAN, YOU CAN.

AND LIKE A LOT OF PILOTS, I'VE FANTASIZED OF THE DAY WHEN I CAN BREAK THE SPEED OF SOUND.

... YOU CAN. I JUST WANT TO BE THE FIRST ONE TO FLY IT, OKAY? BE THE ONE TO FIRST GO FASTER THAN SOUND?

YAMAKOSHI, IF ANYONE CAN MAKE A PROP SUPERSONIC PLANE ...

OH, BELIEVE ME I WILL. SO YOU TELL WHOEVER IT IS YOU'VE LINED UP FOR UNIT 2 TO GET LOST. I'LL BE FLYING THAT PLANE.

THAT'S A DEAL, FRIEND ... ASSUMING YOU LIVE LONG ENOUGH.

I'LL LOSE THE OTHER AND BOTH ARMS IF I HAVE TO BUT I'M GOING TO BE THE FIRST TO DO IT!!

I MEAN, WHAT'S LOSING A FOOT TO THAT?!

ABOUT ONE MONTH LATER ...

NOT A PROBLEM! DON'T FORGET TO DROP YOU AUXILIARY FUEL TANK BEFORE THE DIVE! AND IF YOU LOSE CONTROL AGAIN THEN BAIL OUT AS FAST AS YOU CAN!!

THANKS FOR THE ONE-FOOT PEDAL CONTROL! I'LL BE FINE! NOW LET'S GET THIS SHOW GOING!

MOST DEFINITELY! WE WON'T FAIL THIS TIME!!

IMPACT ANGLE 90 DEGREES

JESUS, LOOK AT THAT THING GO! HEY, DO THE JAPS HAVE JETS ALREADY?!

JAP FIGHTER, 3-O'-CLOCK HIGH AND ASCENDING RAPIDLY!

HMMM ... I WONDER HOW IT WOULD DO AGAINST A MUSTANG OR EVEN A P-47 THUNDERBOLT? OH WELL, IT'S GONE. SO MUCH FOR THAT.

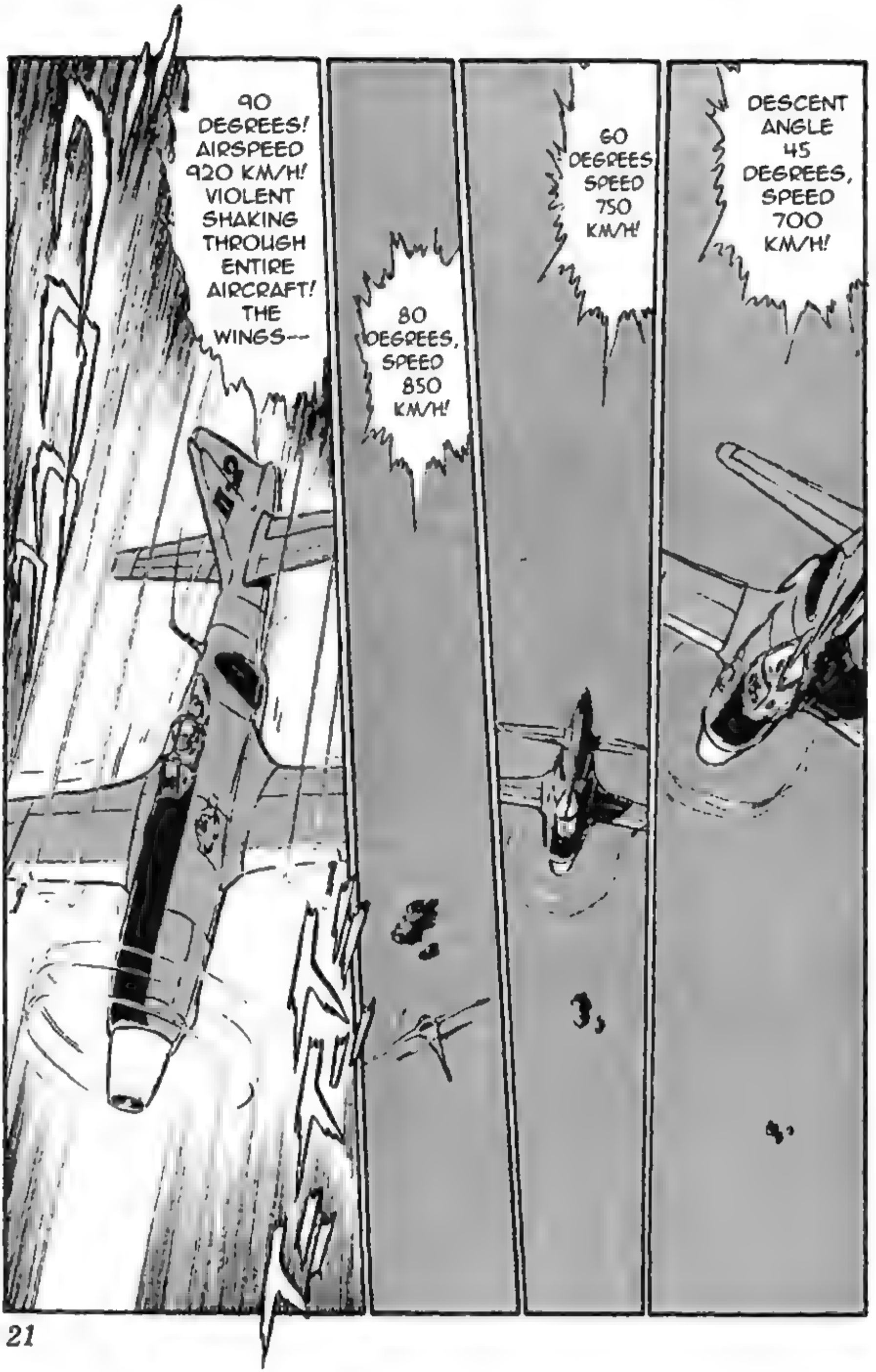
LOOKS KINDA LIKE A TONY* BUT LONGER, AND LOOK AT THAT FUNKY FORWARD DOUBLE PROPELLER RIG!

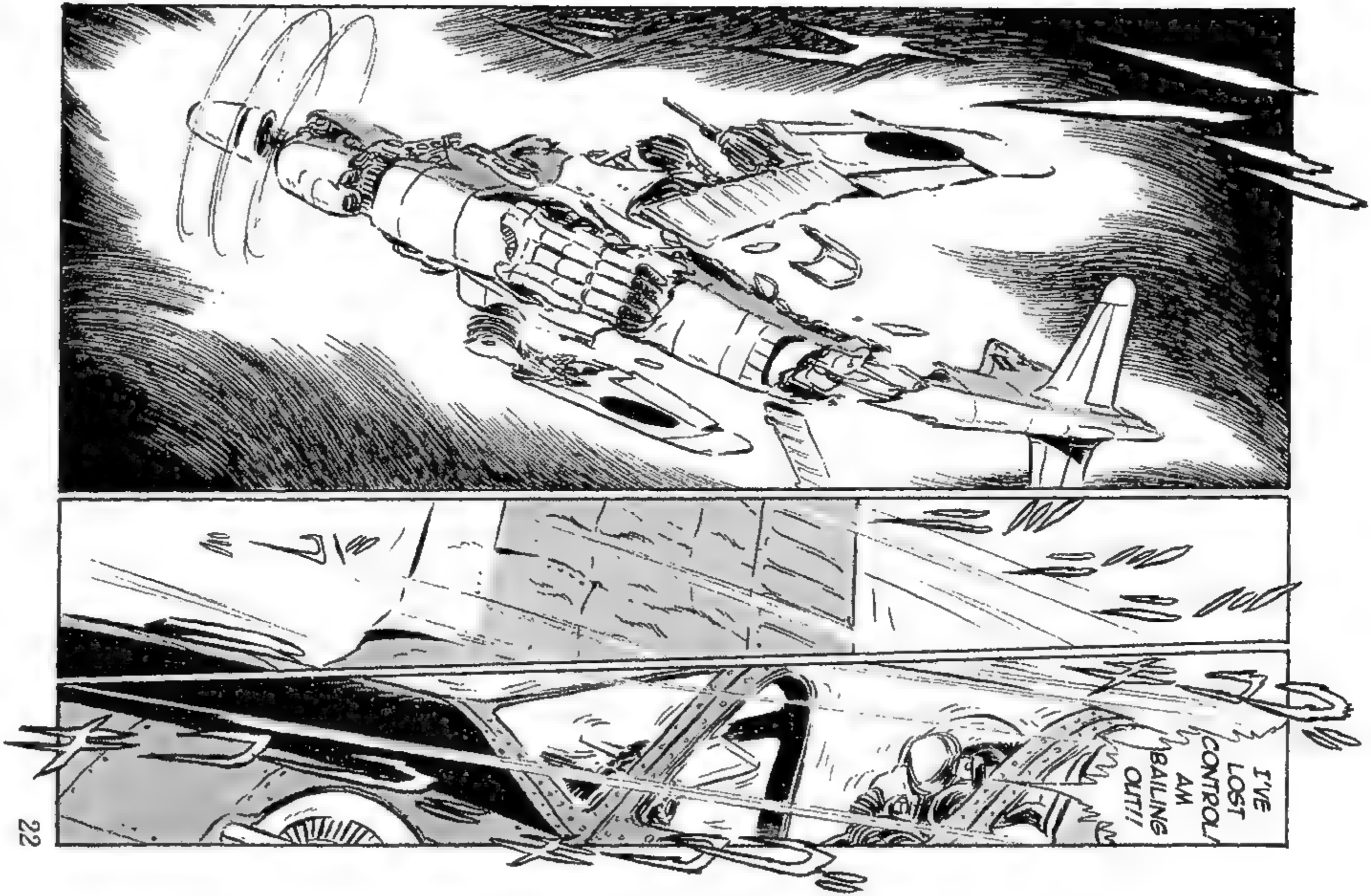
(*) - THE KAWANISHI KI-61 HIEN, AKA THE "JAPANESE MUSTANG" AND CODE NAMED "TONY" BY THE ALLIES. ONE OF MATSUMOTO'S PERSONAL FAVORITE JAPANESE FIGHTERS, JUDGING FROM ITS MANY APPEARANCES IN *THE COCKPIT* SERIES.

WELL, WHATEVER IT WAS, I'LL BET IT CAN'T BEAT THE P-47 IN A DEAD DIVE. NOTHIN' CAN BEAT THE "JUG" IN A DEAD DIVE. NOTHIN'.

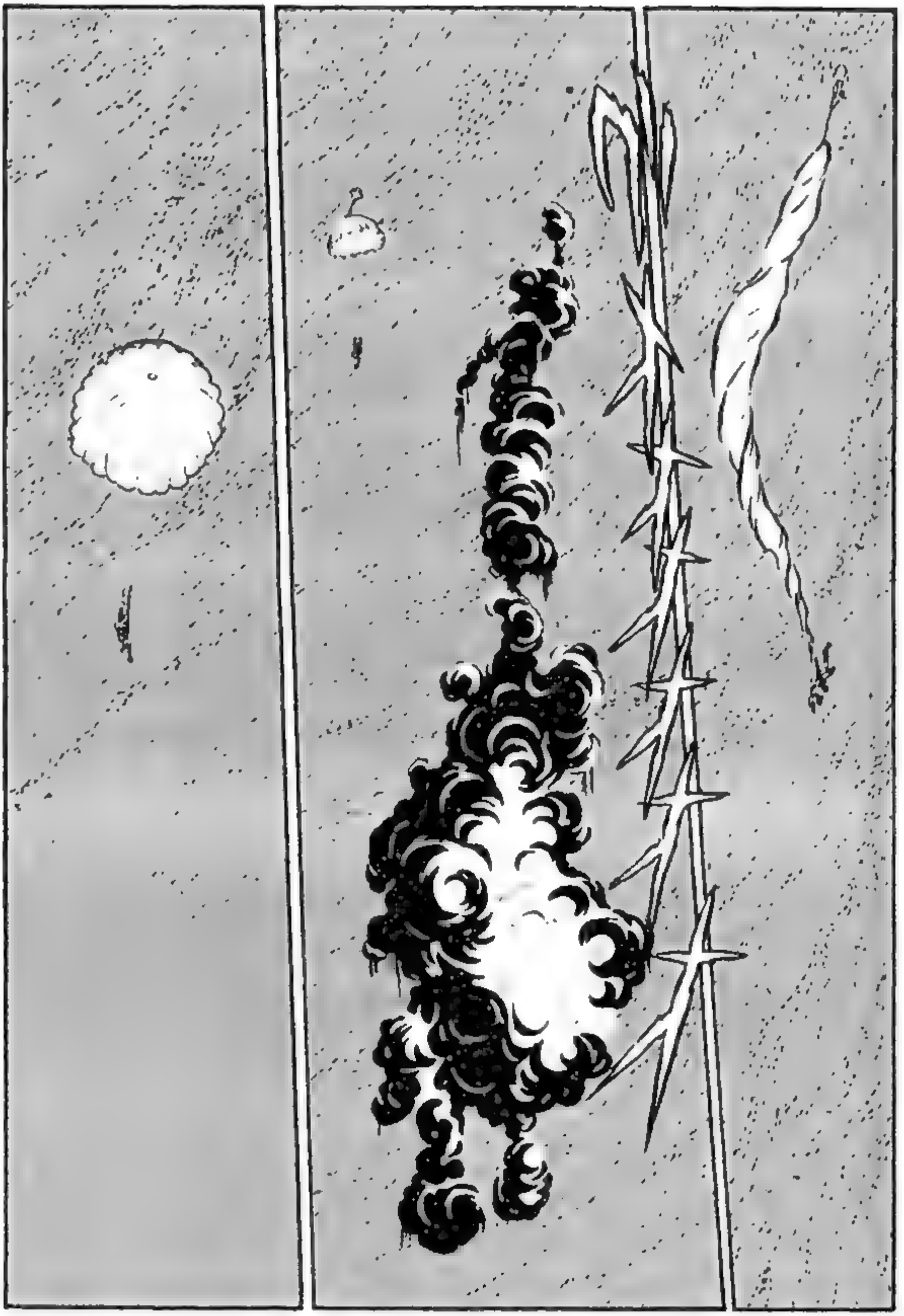
CURRENT LOCATION OVER HACHIJOJIMA ISLAND, ALTITUDE 11,500 METERS. READY TO DROP AUXILIARY FUEL TANKS AND BEGIN DIVE.

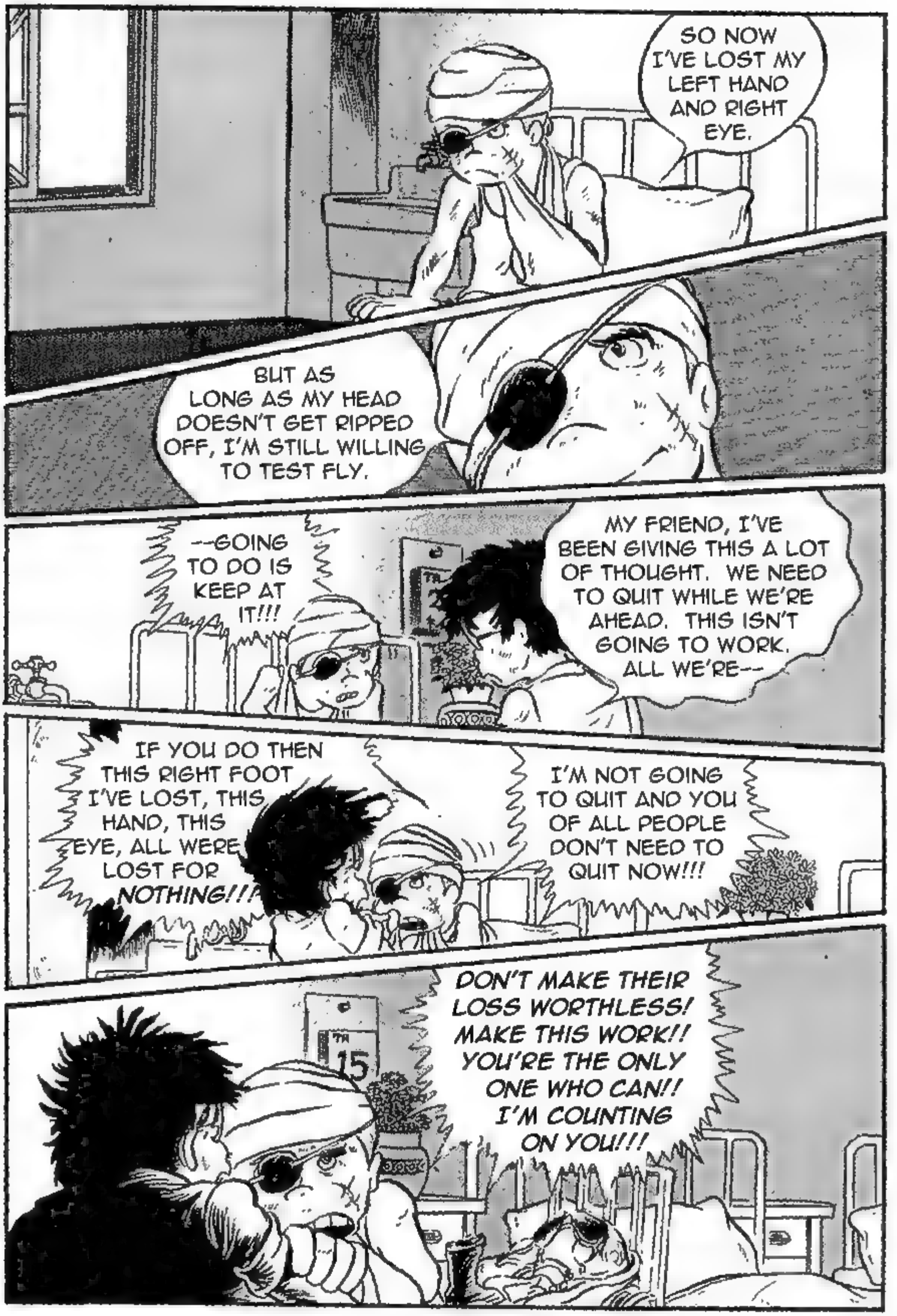
YOU CAN DO IT, BUDDY!


90 DEGREES! AIRSPEED 920 KM/H! VIOLENT SHAKING THROUGH ENTIRE AIRCRAFT! THE WINGS--
80 DEGREES, SPEED 850 KM/H!
60 DEGREES SPEED 750 KM/H!
DESCENT ANGLE 45 DEGREES, SPEED 700 KM/H!
2.
3.
4.


I'VE LOST CONTROL! AM BAILING OUT!!

IMPACT ANGLE 90 DEGREES




SO NOW I'VE LOST MY LEFT HAND AND RIGHT EYE.
BUT AS LONG AS MY HEAD DOESN'T GET RIPPED OFF, I'M STILL WILLING TO TEST FLY.
--GOING TO DO IS KEEP AT IT!!!
MY FRIEND, I'VE BEEN GIVING THIS A LOT OF THOUGHT. WE NEED TO QUIT WHILE WE'RE AHEAD. THIS ISN'T GOING TO WORK. ALL WE'RE--
IF YOU DO THEN THIS RIGHT FOOT I'VE LOST, THIS HAND, THIS EYE, ALL WERE LOST FOR NOTHING!!!
I'M NOT GOING TO QUIT AND YOU OF ALL PEOPLE DON'T NEED TO QUIT NOW!!!
DON'T MAKE THEIR LOSS WORTHLESS! MAKE THIS WORK!! YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN!! I'M COUNTING ON YOU!!!

YAMAKOSHI, IF YOU'RE GOING TO QUIT NOW THEN KILL ME. AFTER THAT, DISBAND THIS UNIT, BURN EVERYTHING TO THE GROUND, AND CRY LIKE A WOMAN!

WHAT WAS IT YOU USED TO TELL ME WHEN WE WERE YOUNG? "THERE ARE TIMES WHEN A MAN HAS TO TRY THE IMPOSSIBLE ..."

"... EVEN KNOWING IT IS IMPOSSIBLE." REMEMBER THAT?! AND NOW YOU STAND THERE AND TELL ME THAT YOU'VE FINALLY HIT THE IMPOSSIBLE?! OH, YAMAKOSHI!

BUT YOU'VE GOT ALL THIS TALENT AT YOUR VIRTUAL FINGERTIPS, FRIEND!

OF COURSE I KNOW IT'S NOT ENTIRELY YOUR FAULT. BOTH OUR COUNTRY AND THE WAR HAVE THEIR SHARE.

DON'T QUIT NOW, YAMAKOSHI! I'M NOT! AS LONG AS I HAVE LIFE IN ME, AS LONG AS I'M IN STILL SOME KIND OF SHAPE TO FLY, I SAY DO IT! LET'S DO IT TOGETHER, YAMAKOSHI! PLEASE!!

AND WE'RE SO CLOSE! WE'RE SO DAMN CLOSE! DO YOU WANT TO GIVE UP ON EVERYTHING NOW WHEN THERE'S ONLY ONE MORE OBSTACLE TO OVERCOME?

UNDERSTAND THIS, DAIBA MY FRIEND. SOONER OR LATER THESE TESTS ARE GOING TO KILL YOU. PROBABLY SOONER.

ALL RIGHT. IF YOU'RE THAT SET ON IT THEN I'LL GO ALONG.

WE'VE STILL GOT THE THIRD UNIT, RIGHT? WELL GET HER READY. AS SOON AS THE DOCTORS CLEAR ME, LET'S GO.

I KNOW WE DON'T HAVE MUCH HIGH OCTANE FUEL LEFT FOR TESTS, SO THIS WILL MOST LIKELY BE THE LAST ONE. SO BE IT.

IF I'M GOING TO DIE SOON LIKE YOU SAY THEN I'D RATHER DIE TRYING TO ACHIEVE MY DREAM THAN IN A BOMBING!

... BUT GET ME BACK IN THE AIR, AT LEAST ONE MORE TIME.

DO WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO DO. ADJUST WHAT-EVER YOU NEED TO ADJUST ...

I SURVIVED THE FLAWS OF THE FIRST TWO! I'M A PRETTY TOUGH OLD BIRD, YOU KNOW.

SO THE THIRD UNIT MIGHT STILL HAVE FLAWS TOO? SO WHAT?!

IF YOU DON'T, I'LL NEVER CALL YOU "FRIEND" AGAIN. IS THAT CLEAR?

YOUR TURBINE BLADES ARE MADE FROM MAGNESIUM ALLOW WE GOT FROM WRECKED B-29S! FAR STRONGER THAN BEFORE BUT DON'T PUSH THEM!

YOU'VE ALSO GOT THE LAST OF OUR HIGH OCTANE FUEL!

THAT'S ALL I'M WORRIED ABOUT NOW. JUST THIS. NOT ABOUT THE WAR OR HOW WE'RE GOING TO LOSE, JUST THIS.

I'VE GOT A GOOD FEELING TODAY, YAMAKOSHI. I'LL BREAK IT TODAY. YOU'LL SEE.

AND IF ANY ENEMY FIGHTERS TRY TO GET IN MY WAY, I PITY THEM.

THE LAST WISH I HAVE LEFT IN THIS LIFE IS TO HEAR THAT SONIC BOOM I'VE OFTEN READ ABOUT. I WANT TO HEAR IT AS A PILOT BEFORE I DIE.

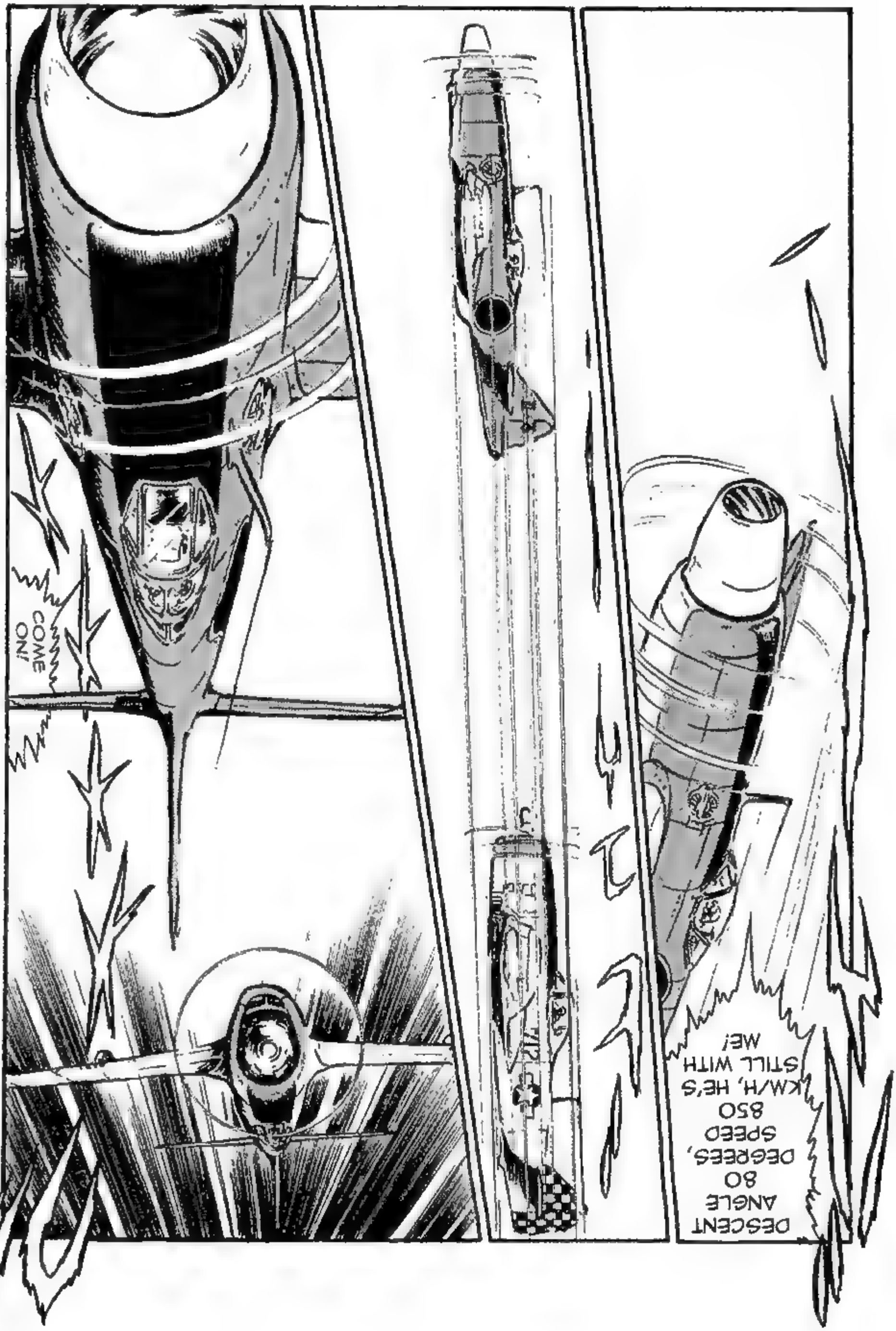
GOOD LUCK, DAIBA.

THIS IS ST. JACQUES! I'VE GOT A JAP BOGEY WITH US AT 12,000, CLIMBING FAST!

DESCENT ANGLE 45 DEGREES, SPEED 700— I'VE GOT COMPANY!

WHAT THE HELL?! OH NO, YOU CAN'T GET AWAY FROM ME THAT EASY! I'M BETTER AT THE DIVE THAN YOU!

THIS IS DAIBA! ALL SET! STARTING TO DIVE!


COME ON!
DESCENT ANGLE 80 DEGREES, SPEED 850 KM/H, HE'S STILL WITH ME!

NOOO!!!

SPEED ... 1,100 KM/H -- WHOLE PLANE ... SHAKING ...

NO! IF HE CAN DO IT I CAN!!

DESCENT ANGLE 90 DEGREES! SPEED 980! VIBRATION INTENSE!

HOW IN THE ...?! NO, I WON'T BE BEATEN BY A JAP PLANE!!

SPEED
...
1,225
KM/H
...
...
I ... DID
IT! ...
I ...
I DID IT!
...
I
,,,

AAAAHHH!!!!

HE BROKE THE SOUND BARRIER?

THAT, MY FRIEND, IS WHAT IS CALLED A SONIC BOOM. HE DID IT. BY THE GODS, THAT SUNUVABITCH REALLY DID IT!

BOOM!!!

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!

... AND ONLY SURVIVING WILL GET YOU IN THE HISTORY BOOKS. I'M SORRY, MY FRIEND.

THE HISTORY OF THE WAR RECORDS THAT ON 15 JULY 1945 THE AMERICAN BATTLESHIP *U.S.S MISSOURI* BEGAN BOMBARDING THE JAPANESE MAINLAND ALONG WITH OTHER AMERICAN WARSHIPS. IT DOES NOT RECORD THAT A JAPANESE PILOT WAS THE FIRST IN WORLD HISTORY TO BREAK THE SOUND BARRIER IN A PROPELLER-DRIVEN AIRCRAFT. FOR AS HIS FRIEND RIGHTLY POINTED OUT AT THE TIME, TO GO DOWN IN HISTORY YOU HAVE TO SURVIVE SUCH THINGS.

FEW ARE LEFT ALIVE WHO CAN TELL OF THIS SINGULAR ACHIEVEMENT, EVEN THOUGH IT EVENTUALLY WENT DOWN AS A FOOTNOTE AT BEST AND NOT A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT.

NEVERTHELESS LET US PAY TRIBUTE TO THOSE WHO WERE WILLING TO RISK EVERYTHING EVEN TO ACHIEVE FOOTNOTE STATUS.

YES HE DID. SADLY, HE DIDN'T SURVIVE THE EFFORT ...

ENDE

<Published in Big Comic Original, November 20, 1975 issue>

MANDELISMS

There has been a lot said and even more done about the special guest star "what if" aircraft that gets featured in this particular tale of Matsumoto's It's even got its own toy model in the F-Toys Cockpit line, where it is given the incorrect designation of the Mitsubishi Ki-99, along with its history and all of its stats to boot The real origin of this lies in an Allied will-o'-the-wisp aircraft that was designated as the Nakajima AT-27 "Gus" by American intelligence and was said to be the next-generation Japanese fighter at the time Here's a modern artist's reconstruction:

Obviously Matsumoto has souped this up a lot for his story He's moved both engines in front and the cockpit back, given it a body more like that of the "Tony" (one of his favorite Japanese fighters BTW but I digress), and added that big-ass intake on the front of the dual propeller assembly (which reminds me of that of the Shinden's), but at the end of the it still looks more like the never-realized "Gus" than anything else IMHO Here's the catch, kiddies The "Gus" never existed, and it wasn't a hoax either like most Internet sources will tell you at this time The real history of the war records that the "Gus" was the invention of American intelligence based on what they thought was hard evidence but which in reality was a pre-war concept design by a young Japanese aircraft designer that got featured in a major Japanese aerospace publication American intel picked up on it and you can pretty much guess the rest from there Only when our intel boys realized it was never real did they finally drop it from all of their wartime data dumps and such, and that's a historical fact you can look up for youselves As we ex-military types and many still in (wink) are fond of saying, "That's military intelligence for you " (grin-and-wink) It wasn't a hoax It was a, uhmm, "mis-assessment of improperly interpreted prewar data " A-hem

BTW if you look up the real world Mitsubishi Ki-99 you're going to find a lot of stuff on a concept aircraft that never got built and looks NOTHING like the airplane which Matsumoto features in this story I don't from where F-Toys got the Mitsubishi Ki-99 designation for this plane It's never named as such in the original Japanese text. Hell, it's never named at all, so there you go. (chuckle)

For what it's worth there WAS a lot of research and development done by most of the major world nations back in the day into the possibility of a supersonic prop-driven aircraft It was finally achieved after war's end by the Americans with the Republic XF-84H Thunderscreech, and it has that name for a reason It was VERY LOUD, often credited as the loudest prop-driven aircraft ever made, and like Matsumoto's fictional aircraft in this story it became very difficult to control once it hit Mach 1 That's why it never entered production and why that particular past dream of aviation was eventually set aside as impractical It CAN be done, but all the trouble you've got to go through to get there makes it impractical Enough of reality Back to Matsumoto's tale

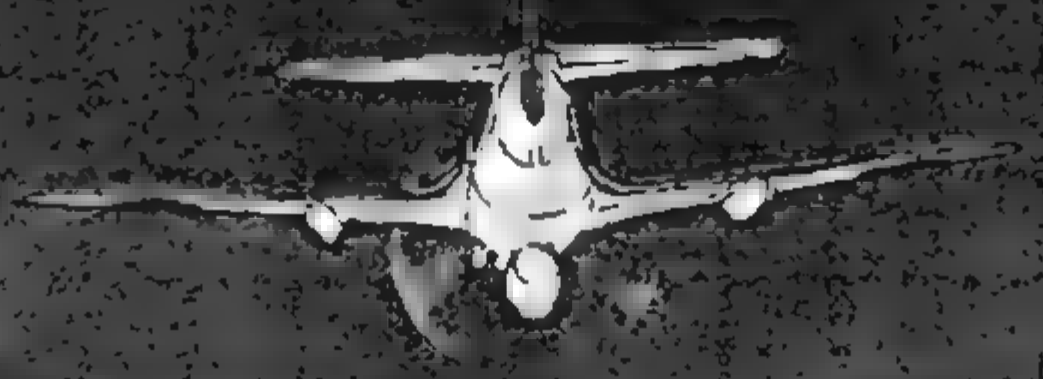
Every time I read this story of Matsumoto's I'm reminded of the multiple real life efforts of the late mountain climber George Mallory (1886-1924) to be first to reach the summet of Mt Everest, the world's tallest mountain He and his Sherpa guide vanished without a trace during their final expedition in 1924, and that's why Sir Edmund Hillary would get credit for this accomplishment when he succeeded in doing it in 1953. It wasn't until decades later and after an unusual period of thaw on Everest that the bodies of Mallory of his guide were found in 1999 What circumstantial evidence exists points to the two of them having achieved the summit and then being killed in a fall on the way back down, although this is admittedly slender and there are those who dispute it One truth from this is clear, though, and it's the same truth that Matsumoto gives us in his fictional tale. To be noted for an accomplishment you have to survive it

Finally, this story also shares with us another of Matsumoto's common themes' that of believing in one's dreams so hard that it becomes possible to make them real and however fleetingly in some cases, as it proves to be at the end of this tale. Daiba's impassioned speech to Yamakoshi about achieving the impossible reminds me of the popular Western song "The Impossible Dream" from the 1965 Broadway musical and 1972 feature film *Man of La Mancha*. I can easily imagine a soft instrumental version of this playing behind Daiba's words in any audiovisual adapatation of this story. Can you? ^_^

TALES FROM THE COCKPIT

SHIDEN (PURPLE LIGHTNING)

SHIDEN (PURPLE LIGHTNING)



WHEN YOU'RE FLYING IN THE STRATOSPHERE, SOME 10,000 METERS ABOVE THE GROUND, YOU CAN ACTUALLY SEE THE CURVATURE OF THE EARTH CURVING AWAY FROM YOU IN ALL DIRECTIONS.

EVEN THE CLOUDS LOOK LIKE LITTLE WISPS OF COTTON STUCK HERE AND THERE ON THE CARPET OF THE EARTH BELOW.

ON THAT PARTICULAR DAY I REMEMBER ENJOYING MYSELF AS I FLEW MY ROUTINE PATROL, APPARENTLY ALONE, BUT REJOICING IN THE SPECTACULAR VIEW.

SOON ENOUGH I WOULD BE BROUGHT DOWN TO EARTH.

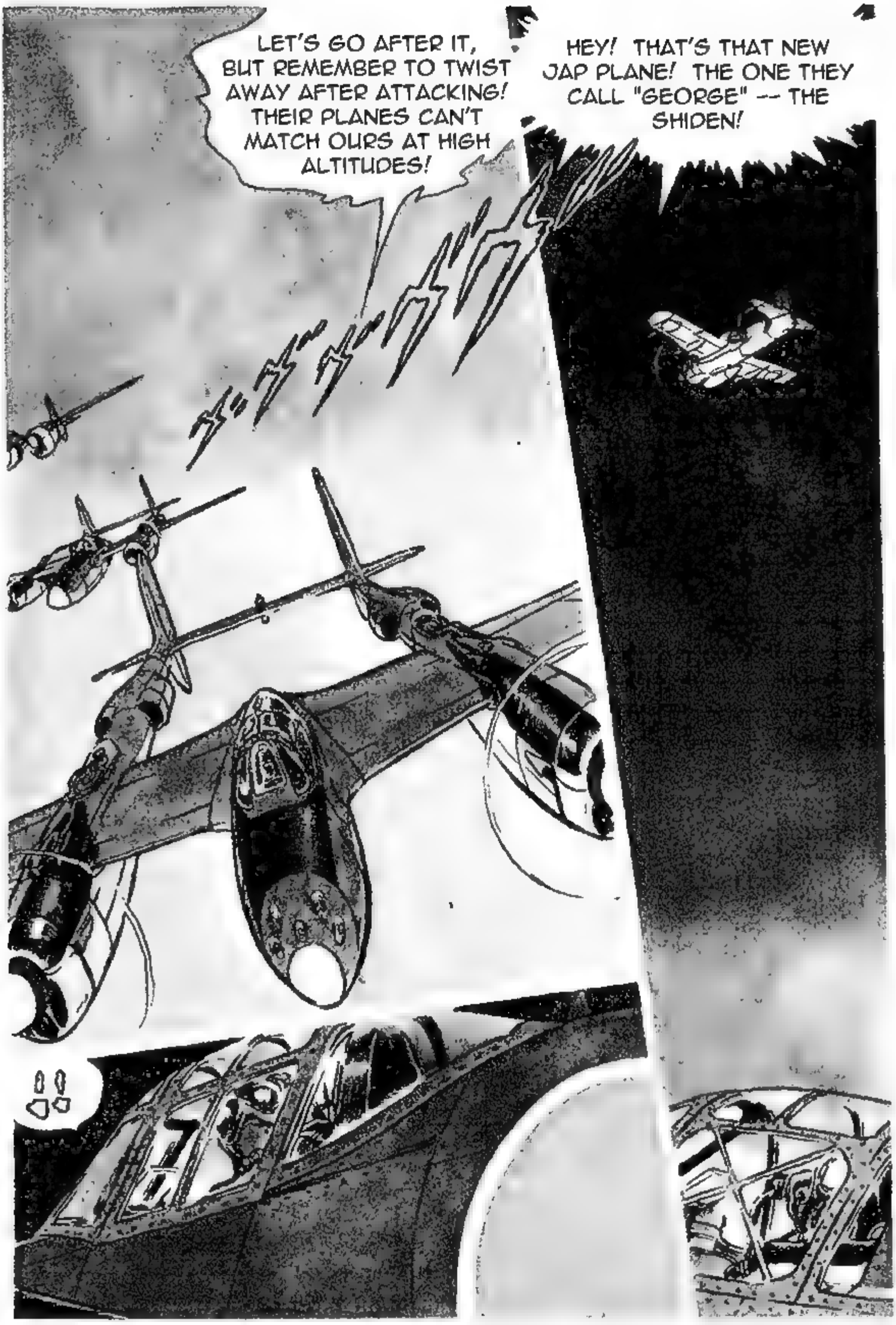
SHIDEN
(PURPLE LIGHTNING)

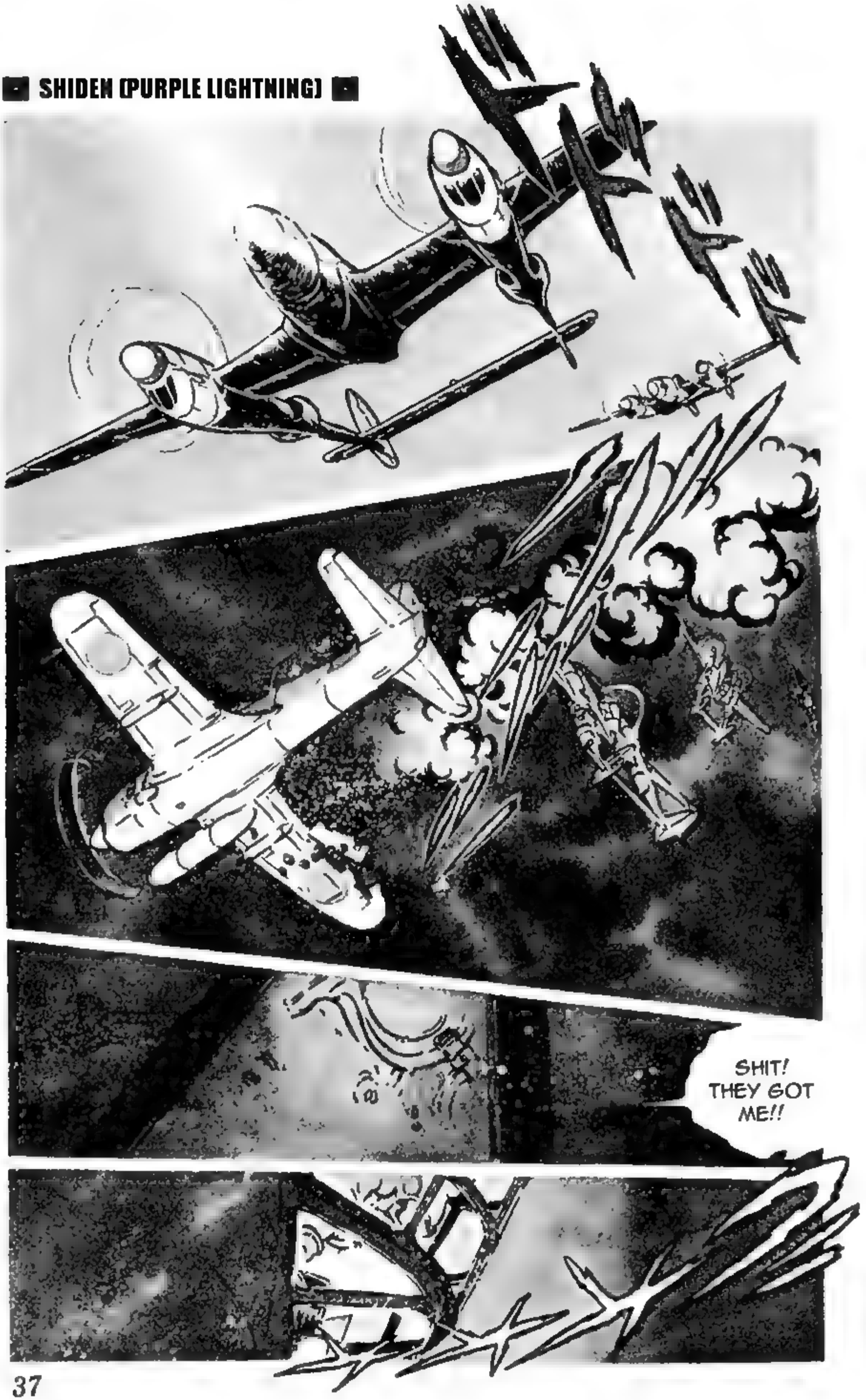
SINGLE PLANE FLYING ALONE AND OFF TO THE RIGHT. MIGHT BE A HELLCAT ... NO, WAIT. THE NOSE IS ALL WRONG FOR A HELLCAT.

TAKES MORE THAN ONE [illegible] BATTLE IN THE SKY, WAS NOT ALONE [illegible]

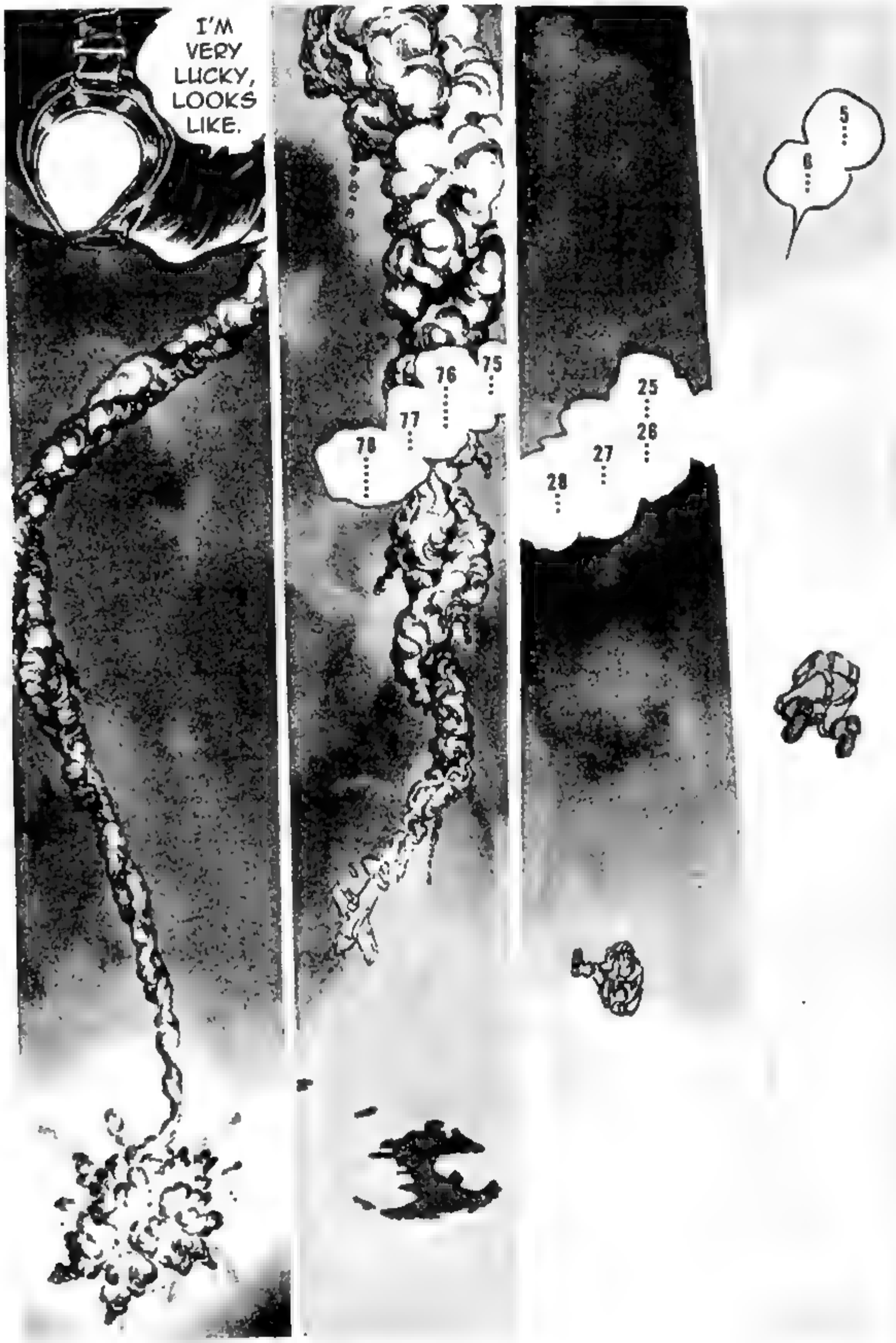
I HAD ALWAYS BEEN OF THE OLD SCHOOL, THAT PILOTS WERE A NOBLE BREED APART ...

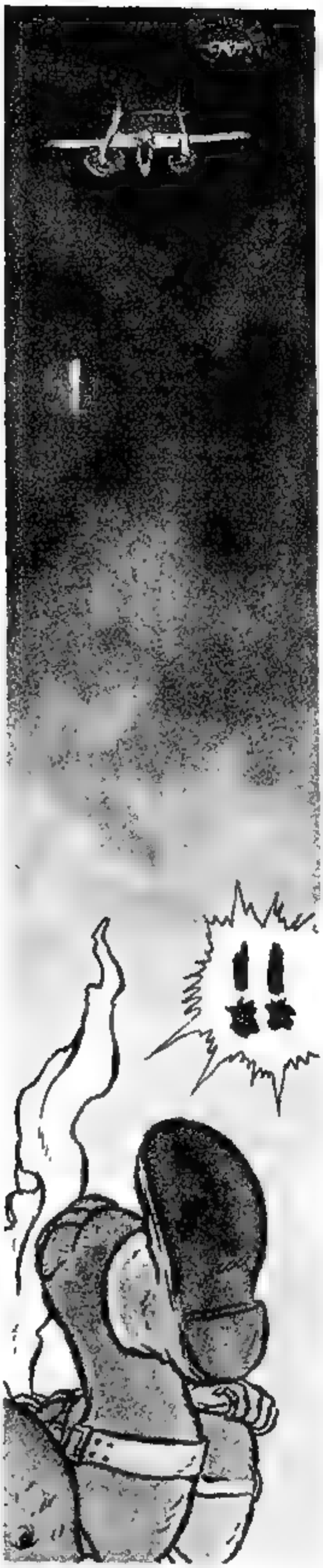
[illegible] THAT DAY I LEARNED [illegible] FELLOW PILOTS

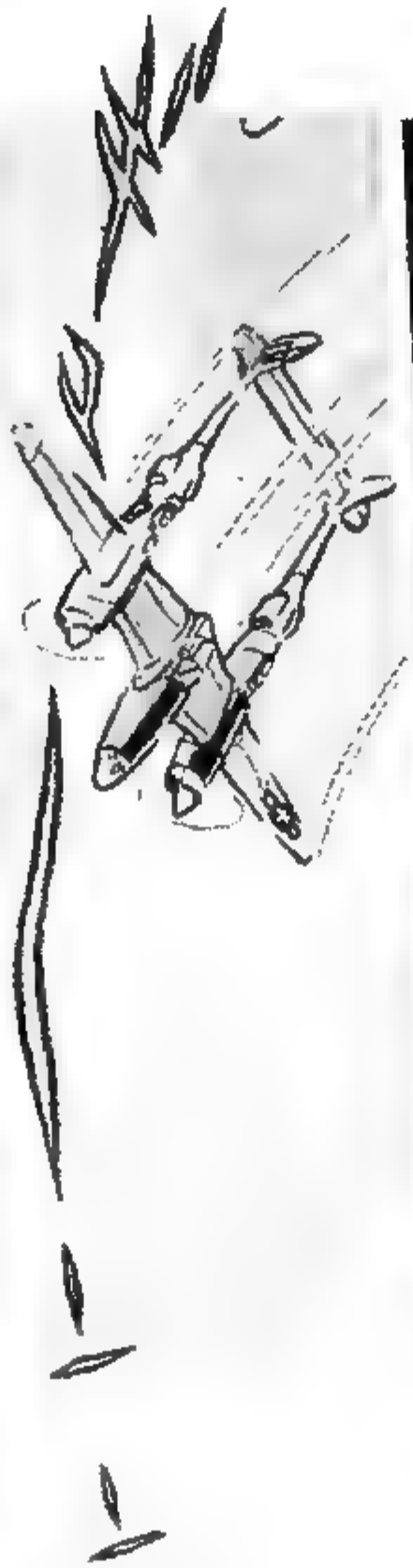

LET'S GO AFTER IT, BUT REMEMBER TO TWIST AWAY AFTER ATTACKING! THEIR PLANES CAN'T MATCH OURS AT HIGH ALTITUDES!
HEY! THAT'S THAT NEW JAP PLANE! THE ONE THEY CALL "GEORGE" -- THE SHIDEN!


SHIT!
THEY GOT
ME!!

4...
3...
2...
!...
!
AM I DEAD? NO! I'M ALIVE!


I'M VERY LUCKY, LOOKS LIKE.
5
6
75
76
77
78
25
26
27
28





AWWW SHIT! I SPOKE TOO SOON!

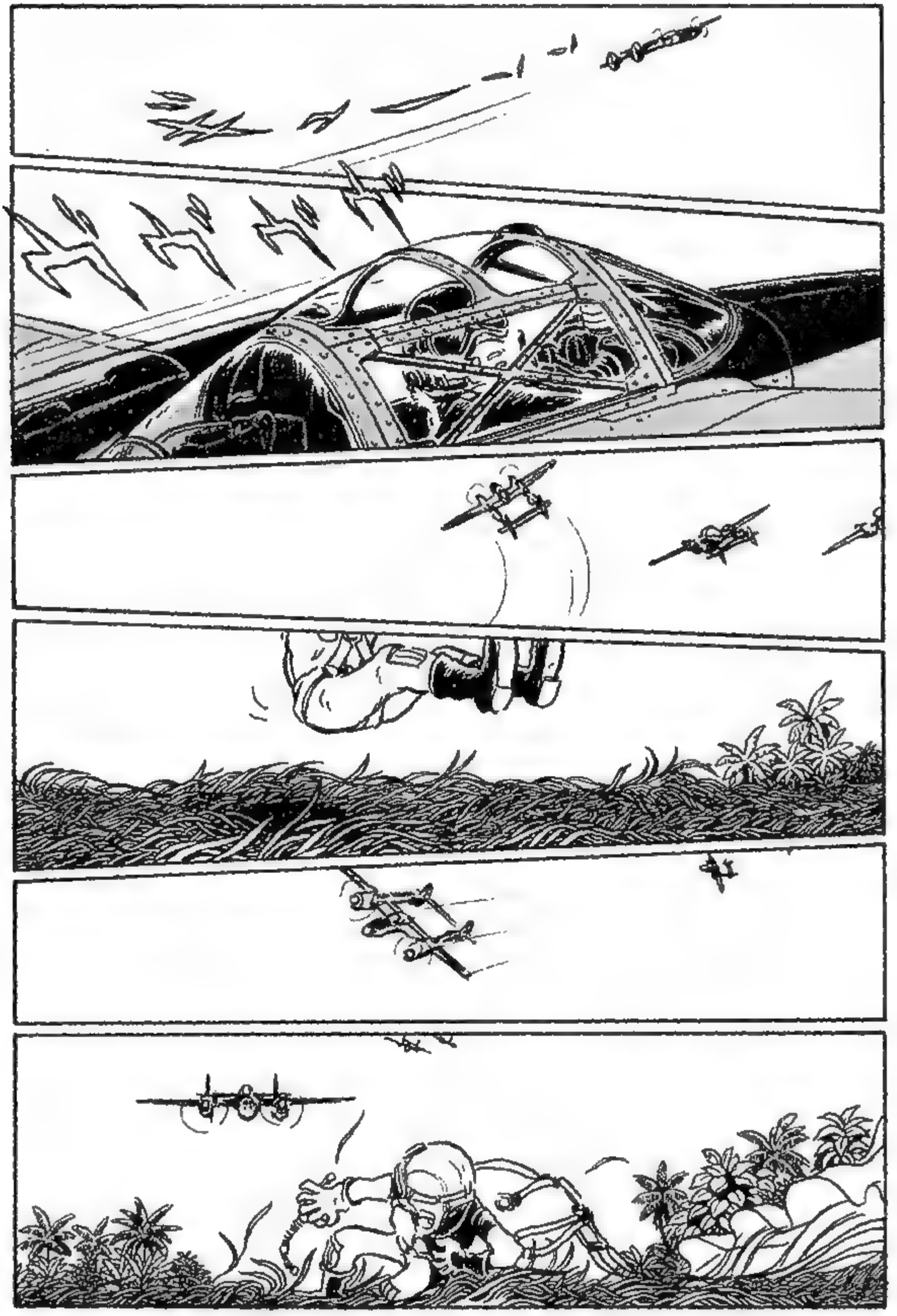
OH! ABOUT TIME!

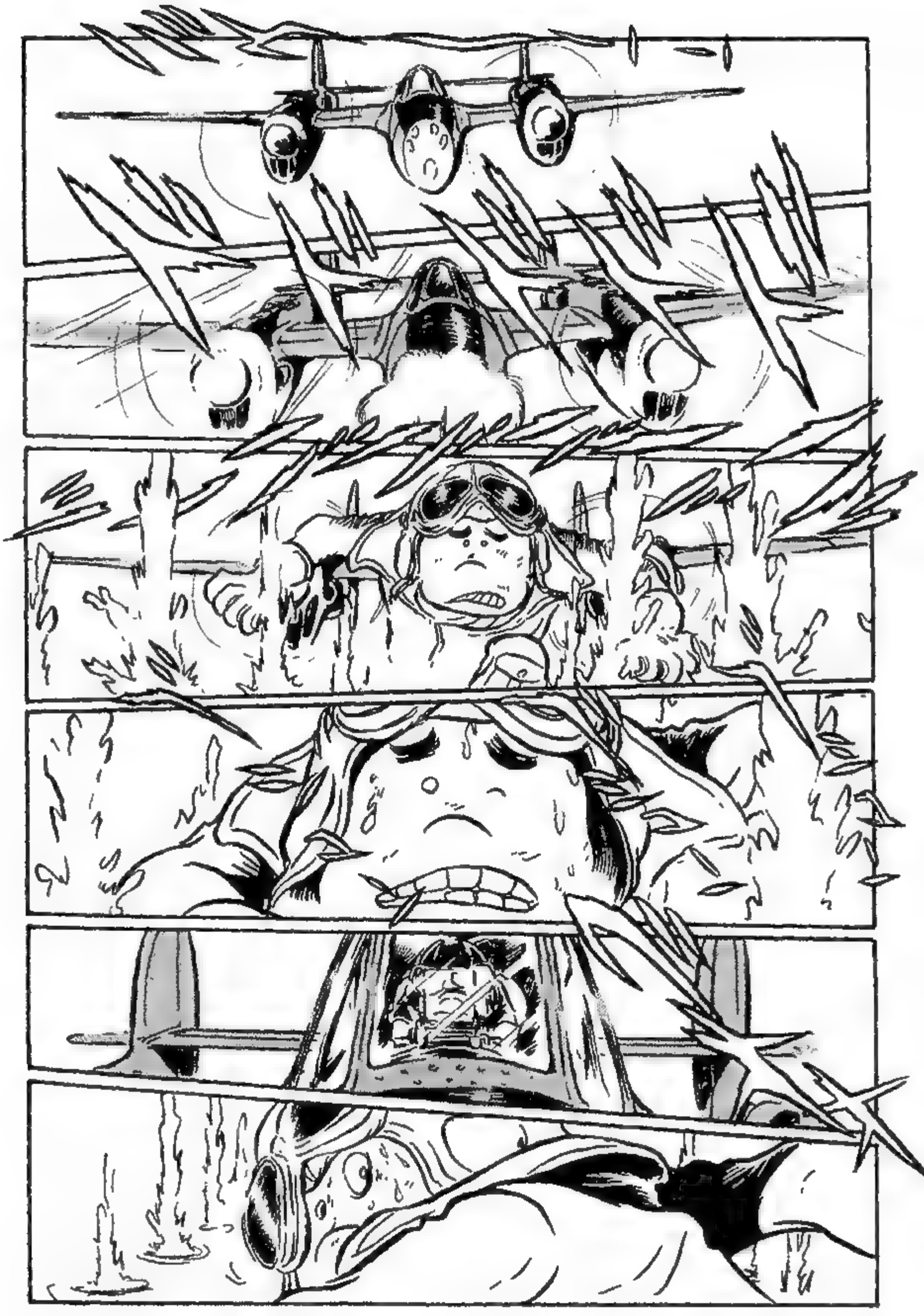
IT WAS DANGER-OUS TO WAIT THIS LONG TO POP MY CHUTE.

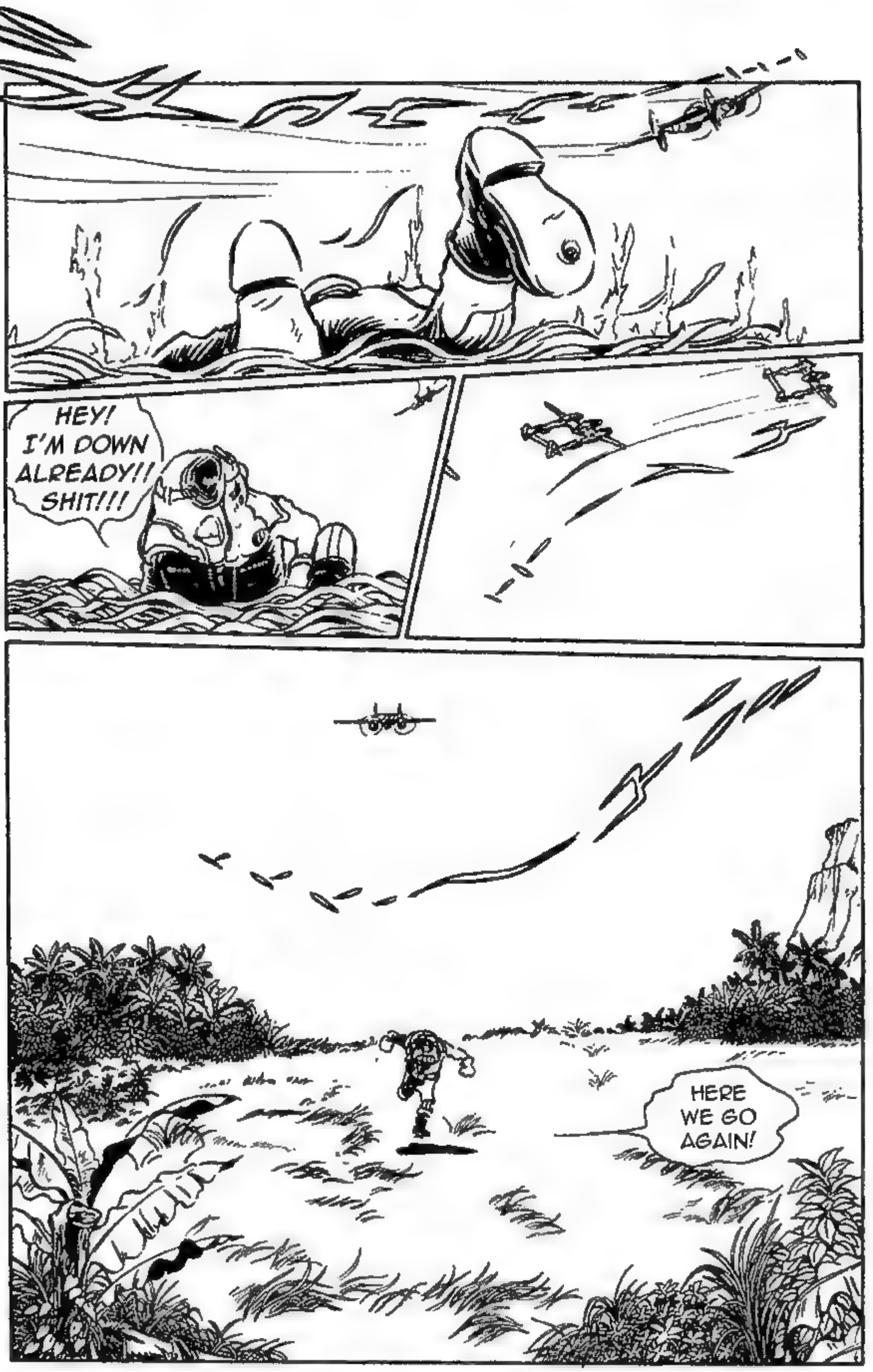
I'M LUCKY I DIDN'T PASS OUT OR GET SHOT UP FIRST.

101 ... 102 ... 103 ...

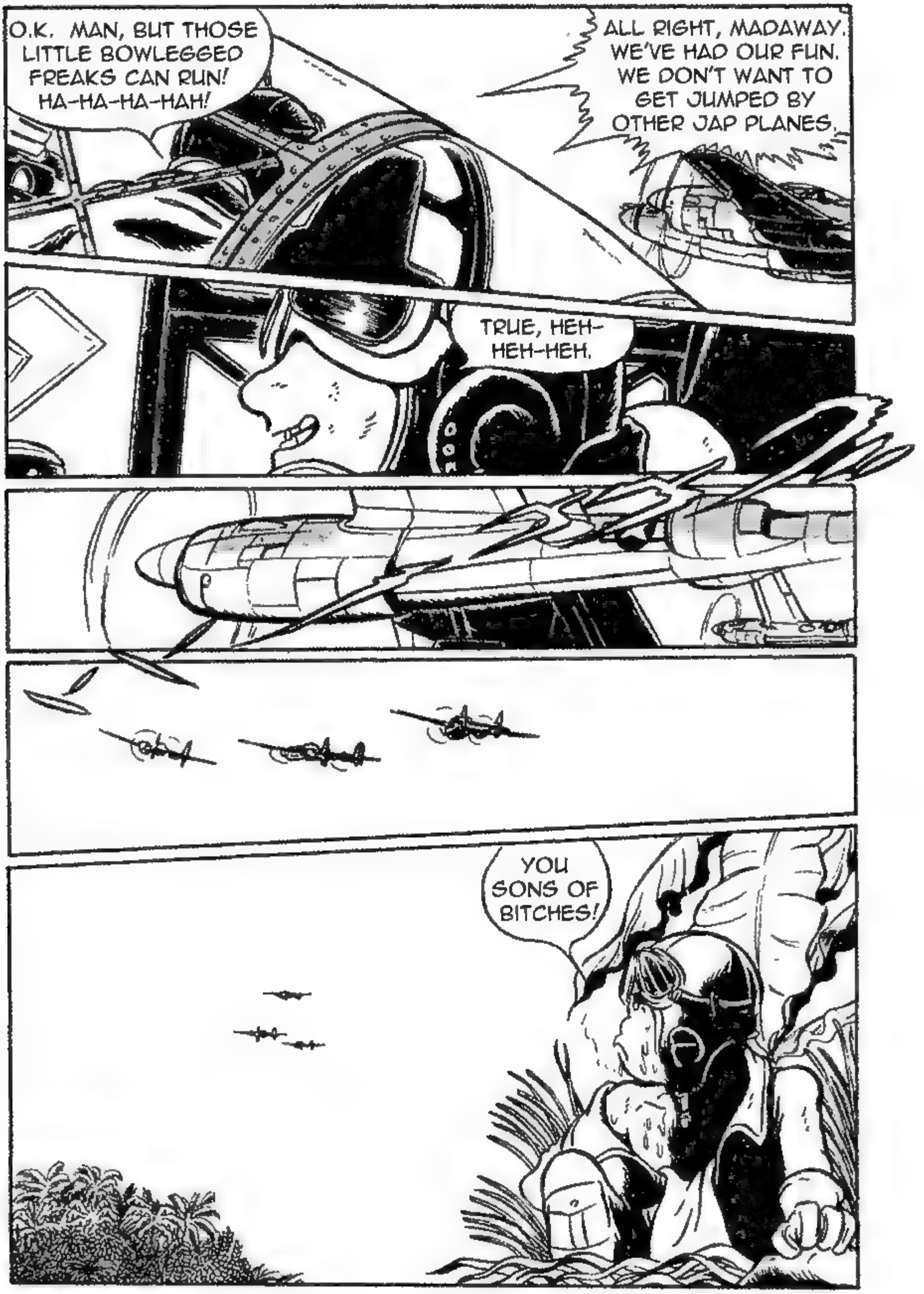
108 !!






HEY! I'M DOWN ALREADY!! SHIT!!!
HERE WE GO AGAIN!

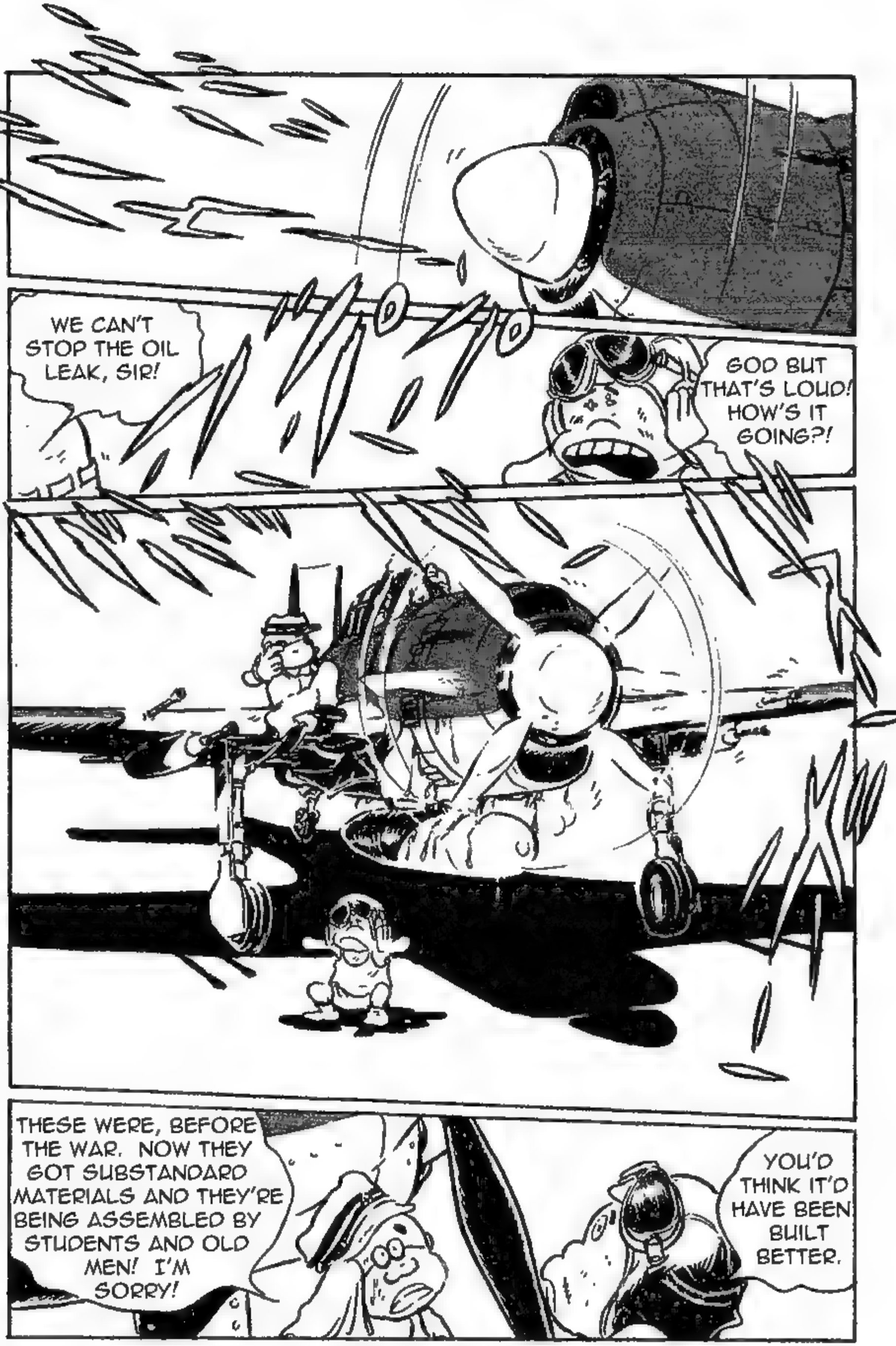
SHIDEN (PURPLE LIGHTNING)

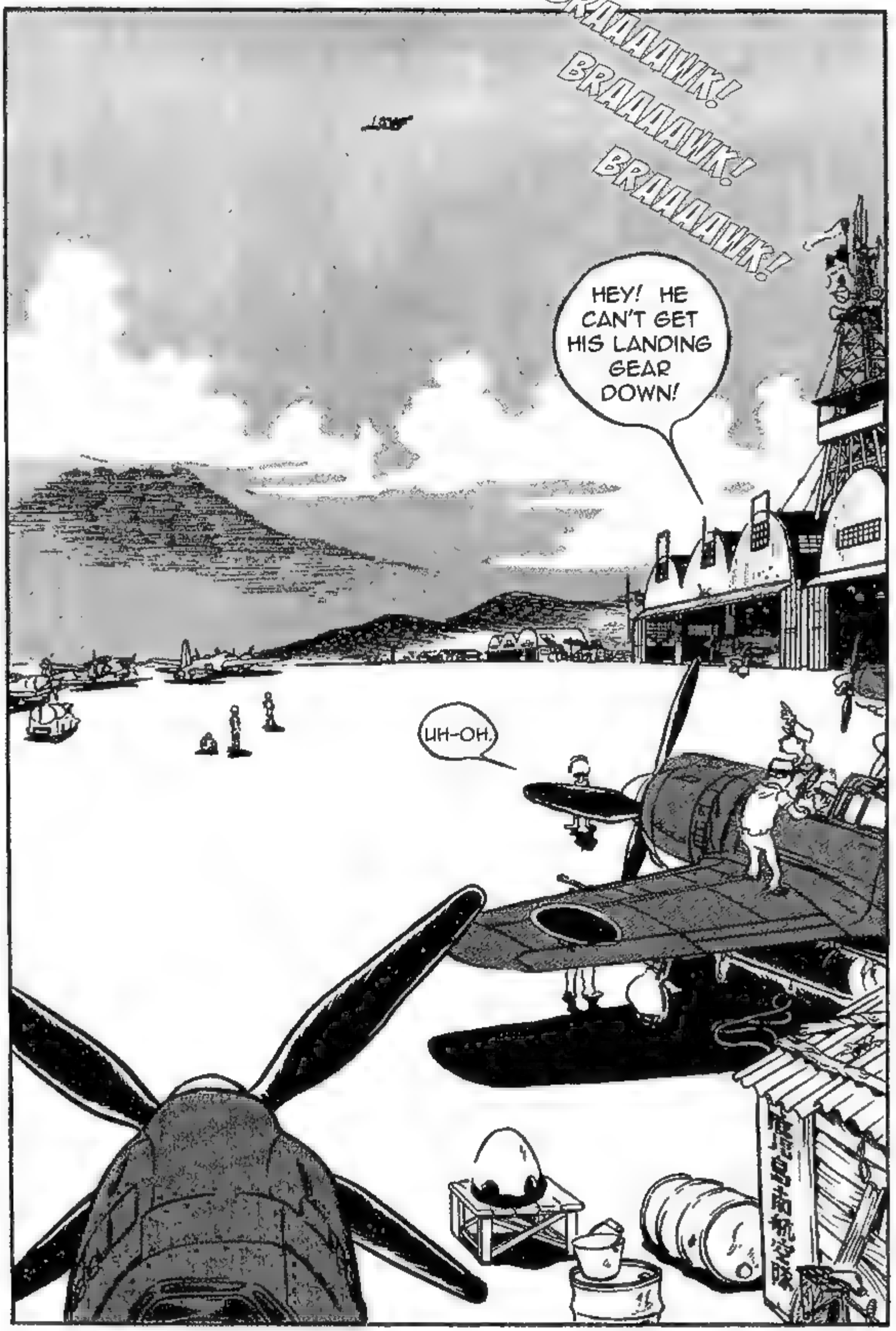

O.K. MAN, BUT THOSE LITTLE BOWLEGGED FREAKS CAN RUN! HA-HA-HA-HAH!
ALL RIGHT, MADAWAY. WE'VE HAD OUR FUN. WE DON'T WANT TO GET JUMPED BY OTHER JAP PLANES.
TRUE, HEH-HEH-HEH.
YOU SONS OF BITCHES!

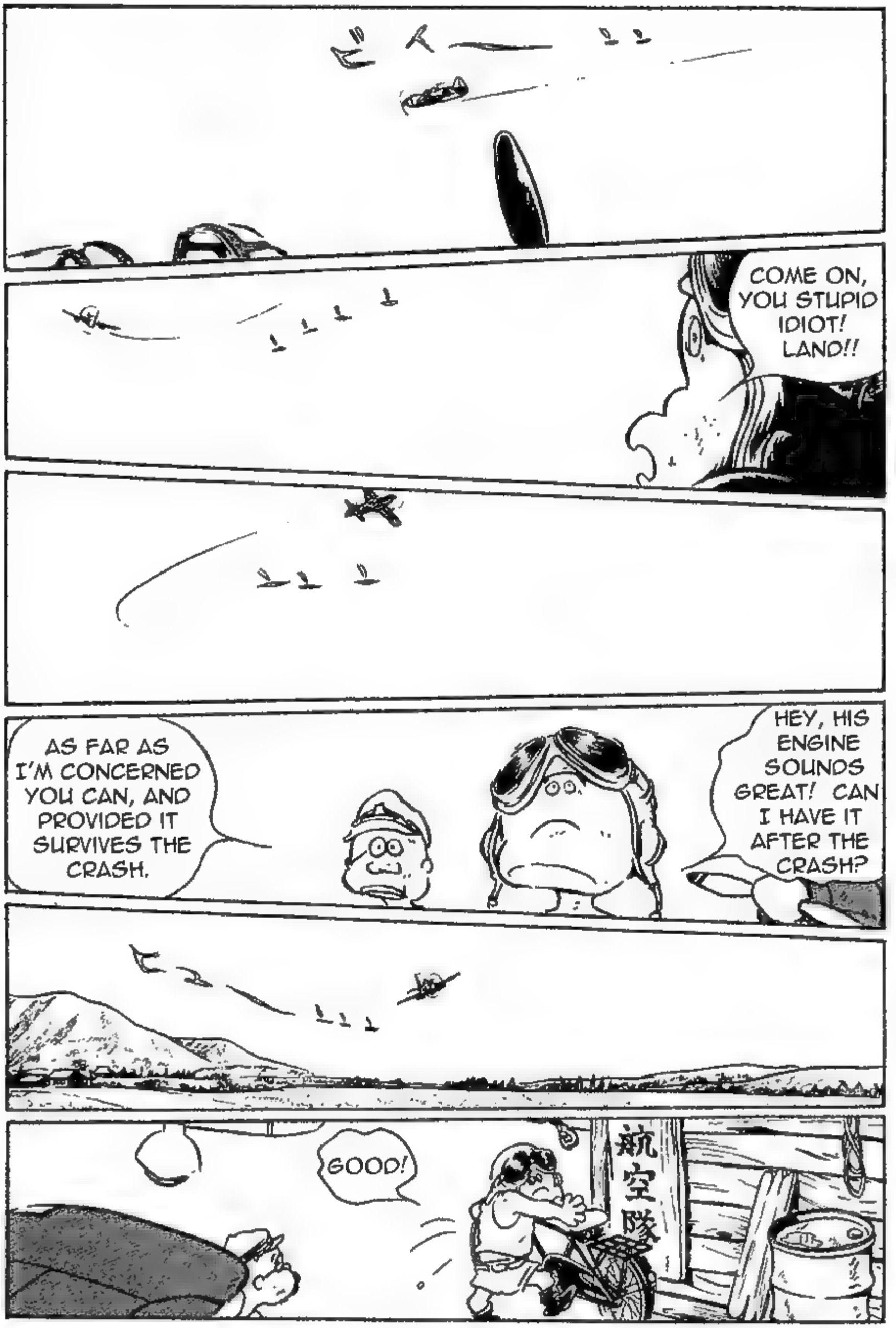
BUT IT WASN'T. I DIDN'T KNOW THAT AT THE TIME, BUT I WOULD FIND OUT ABOUT A YEAR LATER.

BY THEN I HAD BEEN ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES TO ESCAPE THE PHILIPPINES, AND WAS REASSIGNED TO A FIGHTER UNIT DEFENDING OUR HOMELAND AGAINST THE AMERICANS ....

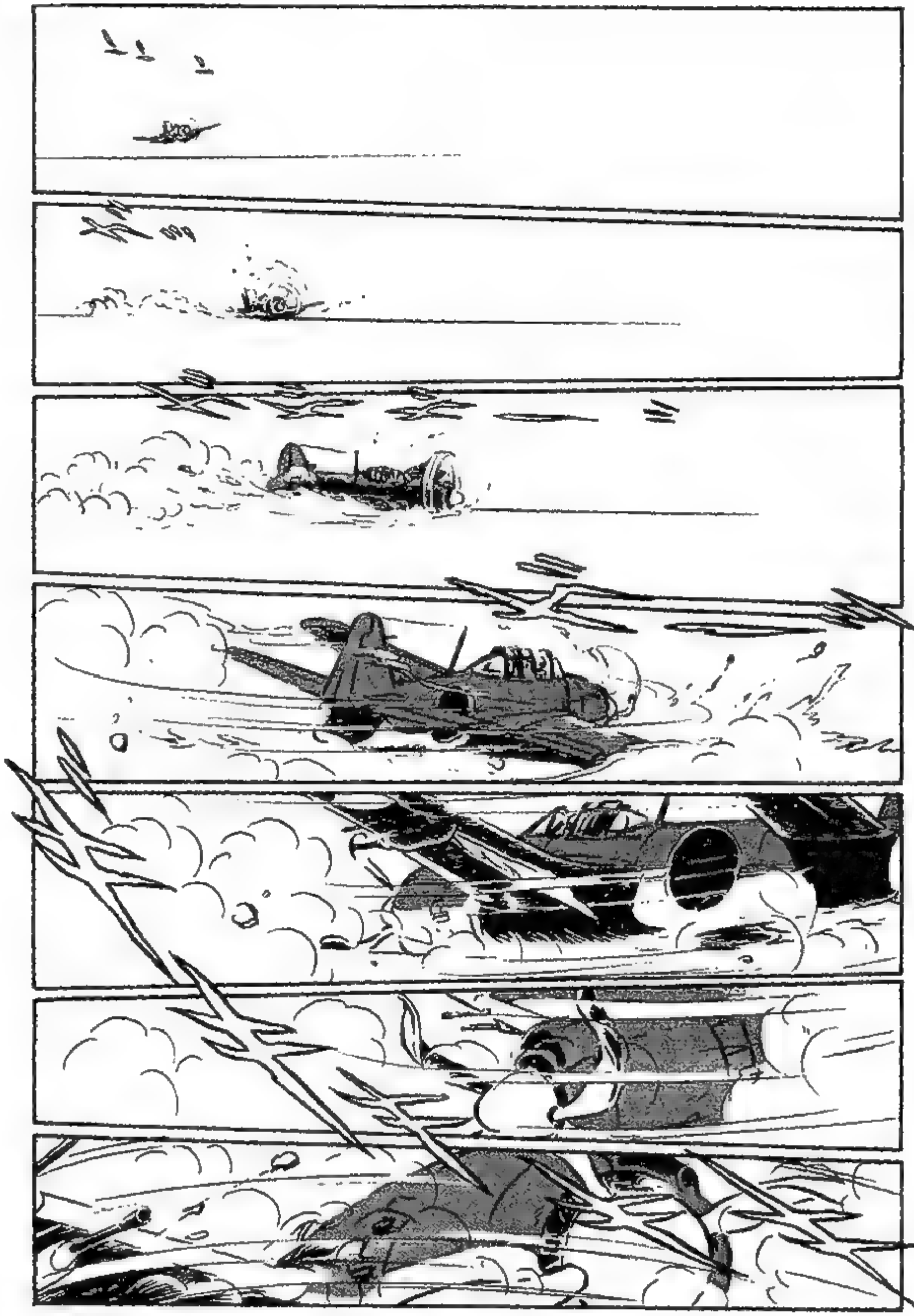
AT LEAST IT'S OVER.


WE CAN'T STOP THE OIL LEAK, SIR!
GOD BUT THAT'S LOUD! HOW'S IT GOING?!
THESE WERE, BEFORE THE WAR. NOW THEY GOT SUBSTANDARD MATERIALS AND THEY'RE BEING ASSEMBLED BY STUDENTS AND OLD MEN! I'M SORRY!
YOU'D THINK IT'D HAVE BEEN BUILT BETTER.


BRAAAAWK!
BRAAAAWK!
BRAAAAWK!
HEY! HE CAN'T GET HIS LANDING GEAR DOWN!
UH-OH.


COME ON, YOU STUPID IDIOT! LAND!!
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED YOU CAN, AND PROVIDED IT SURVIVES THE CRASH.
HEY, HIS ENGINE SOUNDS GREAT! CAN I HAVE IT AFTER THE CRASH?
GOOD!
航空隊

SHIDEN (PURPLE LIGHTNING)



?

HEY! I WANT YOUR ENGINE! DON'T LET ANY ONE ELSE HAVE IT!!

YOUR ENGINE! THE REST OF YOUR PLANE IS TOAST, RIGHT! I WANT THE ENGINE!! THAT'S ALL I WANT!!!

YOU WANT WHAT?!

YOU CAN HAVE THE WHOLE FUCKIN' PLANE FOR ALL I CARE.

CAN I HAVE IT? PLEASE?

オレノ

YOU'RE MINE! YOU'RE ALL MINE! BWU-HA-HA-HAH!

ME?! I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!
LT. HATTORI! THE COLONEL WANTS YOU IN THE PREP ROOM!
DON'T WORRY. I'LL GET THIS PULLED AND PUT INTO YOUR PLANE FOR YOU.
I GOTTA GO.
NO SWEAT!
THANKS A LOT! I MEAN IT!
THE COLONEL'S NEVER DONE THAT BEFORE. I WONDER WHAT IN THE WORLD'S GOING ON?
HE CALLED FOR ME BY NAME.
I'D JUST AS SOON BE A FACE IN HIS CROWD OF PILOTS.

NOTICE HOW THE AMERICANS HAVE REPEATED THIS PARTICULAR SCENE. LET'S RUN THAT AGAIN FOR HATTORI.

?

RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A

HATTORI! THERE YOU ARE! COME ON IN!

RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A

?

RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A

SHIDEN (PURPLE LIGHTNING)

RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A
RAK-A

UHH ... YES SIR.

THE END

RAK-A
RAK-A

IS THAT YOU, LT. HATTORI?

I CAN SEE WHY, SIR.

RAK-A

THE SWISS GOT THIS FOR US. IT'S AN ARAMOUNT NEWSREEL. THEY THOUGHT WE MIGHT BE INTERESTED.

Paramount

IT'S TITLED, "THE PATHETIC END OF JAPANESE PIGS" AMERICAN WARTIME PROPAGANDA, OF COURSE.

FROM WHAT WE'VE BEEN TOLD, IT WAS MADE TO SHOW HOW COWARDLY JAPANESE PILOTS ARE IN COMPARISON TO THE AMERICANS.

ALL JAP AIRS SHOT

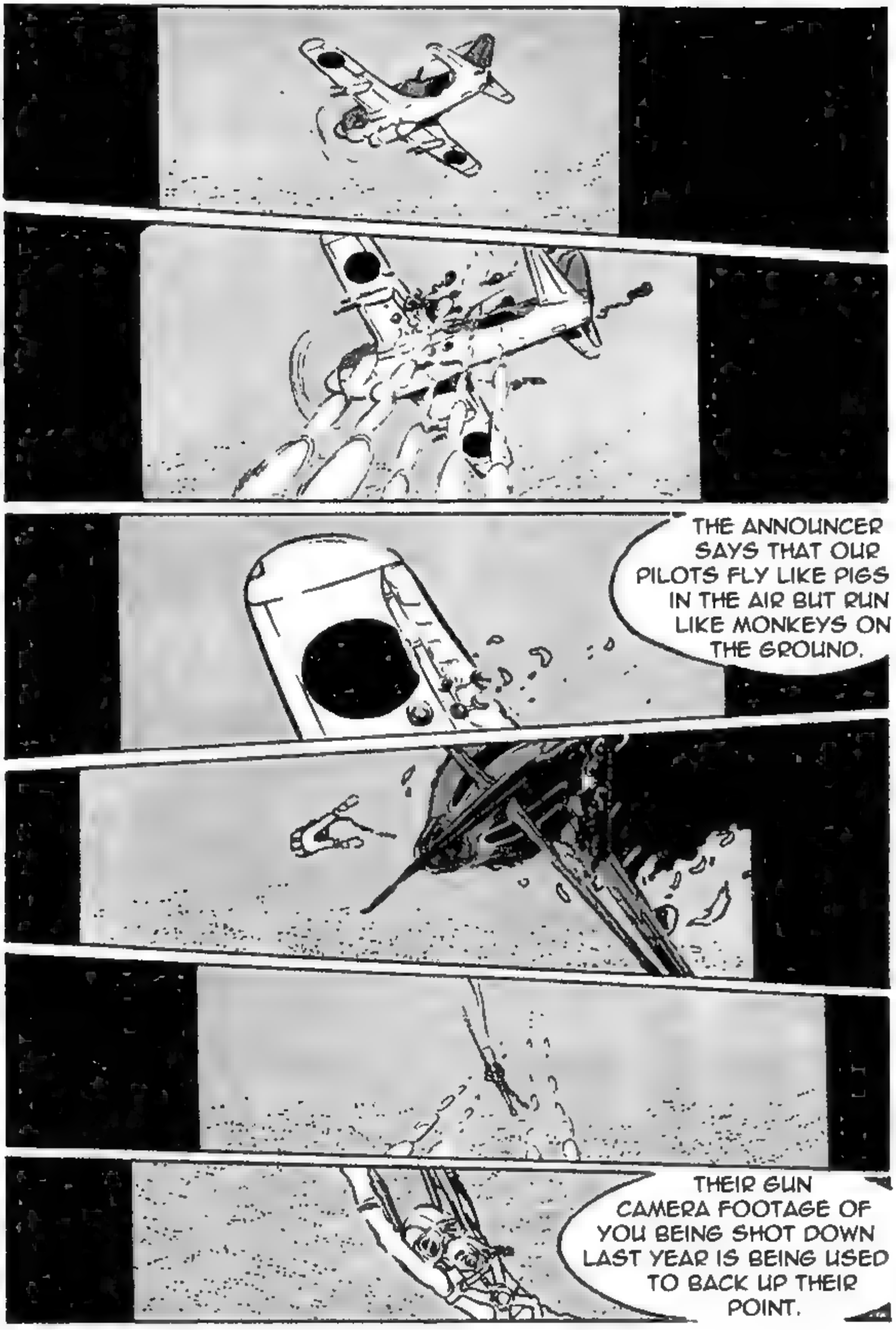
RAK-A
RAK-A

This is a U.S. Army Air Force P—38 calling. Now we have completely knocked out the Japanese attack force.

And also we have now seen the last of Admiral Yamamoto. The Rising Sun has been transformed into a Setting Sun.

Let this be seen as an example to all the people of the world who cherish liberty.

THAT'S MY PLANE! BUT HOW?


THE ANNOUNCER SAYS THAT OUR PILOTS FLY LIKE PIGS IN THE AIR BUT RUN LIKE MONKEYS ON THE GROUND.
THEIR GUN CAMERA FOOTAGE OF YOU BEING SHOT DOWN LAST YEAR IS BEING USED TO BACK UP THEIR POINT.

Pilot name is Lieut. Hattori ! Empire Navy famous expert!!

CAPTURED RECORDS, NO DOUBT.

BUT HOW DID THEY KNOW MY NAME?

DON'T FORGET, THEY CAPTURED THE AIRFIELD OUT OF WHICH YOUR FLIGHT WAS BASED. THAT'S PROBABLY HOW, HATTORI.

I HAVE TO GIVE THEM CREDIT FOR THEIR GUN CAMERAS. I WISH OURS COULD BE THAT SHARP AND DETAILED.

YES SIR.

I WANTED YOU TO SEE THIS BECAUSE YOU NEEDED TO KNOW THAT IT EXISTS.

SO *HE'S* THE ONE WHO SHOT ME DOWN ....

AND HERE IS THE HERO OF THE HOUR, LT. BEN CHRISTIAN MADAWAY!

"JAP PILOTS? MEH! NOW *GERMAN* PILOTS, THEY'RE REAL PILOTS AND A REAL CHALLENGE! BUT JAP PILOTS?! WELL, YOU SAW MY GUN CAMERA FOOTAGE. THEY'D JUST AS SOON RUN THAN FIGHT!"

HE MUST BE! A P-38 SHOT ME DOWN AND THAT'S A P-38!*

"YOU KNOW, WITH PILOTS LIKE THAT TO FIGHT THIS WAR SHOULD BE OVER PRETTY SOON."

"IF GOD HAD MEANT YELLOW MONKEYS TO FLY, HE'D HAVE GIVEN THEM WINGS!"

RAK-A RAK-A RAK-

AND THEY DRIVE THEIR POINT HOME WITH YOU RUNNING AWAY AGAIN.

RAK-A RAK-A RAK-A RAK-A

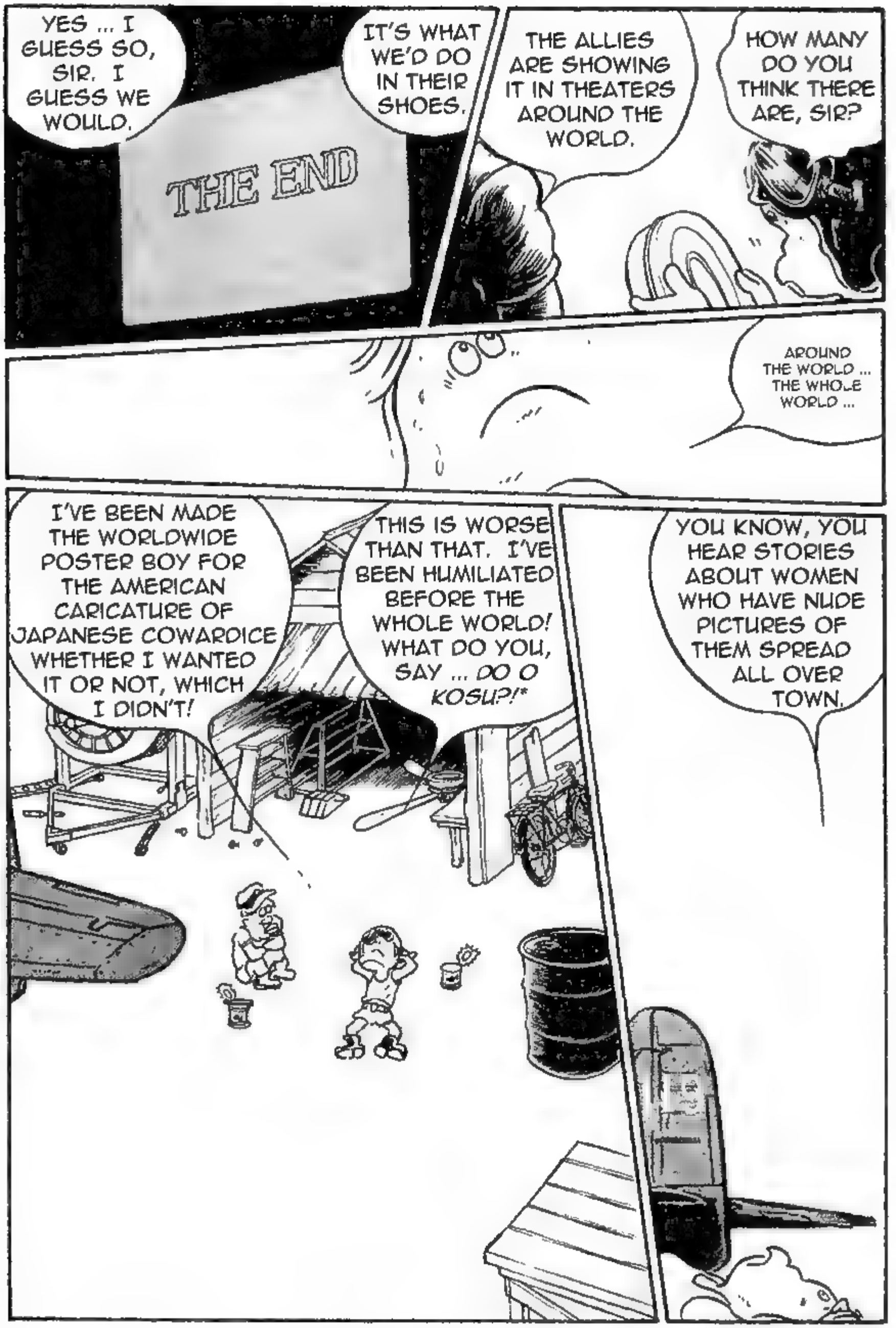
OF COURSE

GO

RAK-A RAK-A RAK-A

OF COURSE, THIS ISN'T THE ONLY COPY OF THIS NEWSREEL.

(*) THE LOCKHEED P-38 LIGHTNING HEAVY FIGHTER, ONE OF THE BEST ALLIED HEAVY FIGHTER AIRCRAFT OF THE WAR.



(*) DO O KOSU – THE JAPANESE ANALOG TO THE ENGLISH EXPRESSION "BEYOND THE PALE." SOMETHING THAT IS SO OUTRAGEOUS AS TO BE BEYOND FORGIVENESS OR REDEMPTIONN.

SOME-
DAY ....

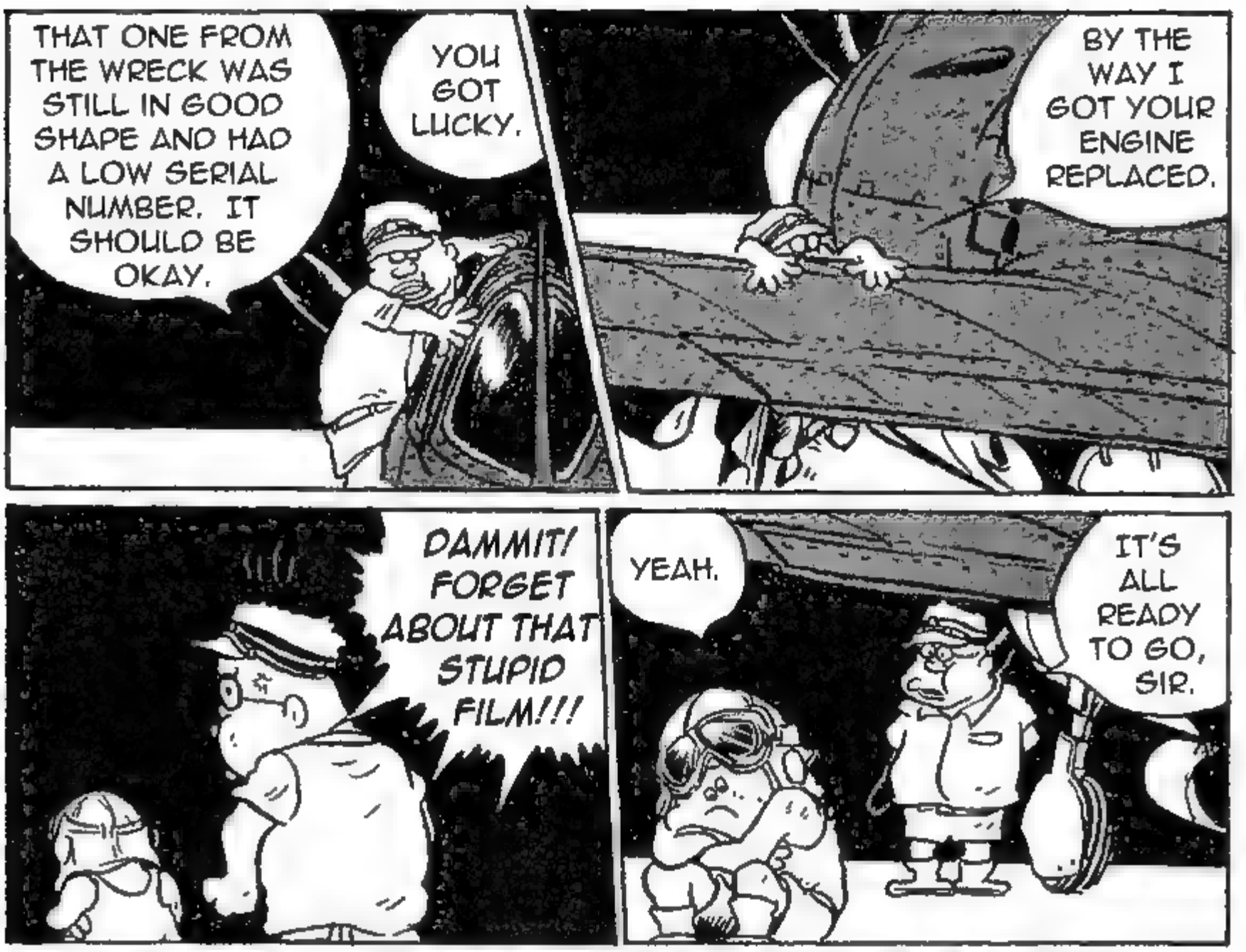
I SO
WANT TO
SHOOT HIS
PRETENTIOUS
ASS DOWN.

I JUST
HOPE IT
HAPPENS
BEFORE THE
WAR IS
OVER.

YEAH.
MADAWAY.
WE'LL
MEET AGAIN
SOMEDAY ...

... AND
WHEN
WE
DO ....

THERE'S ONLY ONE
WAY TO REDEEM
YOURSELF, SIR.
TAKE OUT THE
MAN WHO DID
THAT TO YOU.


THAT ONE FROM THE WRECK WAS STILL IN GOOD SHAPE AND HAD A LOW SERIAL NUMBER. IT SHOULD BE OKAY.
YOU GOT LUCKY.
BY THE WAY I GOT YOUR ENGINE REPLACED.
DAMMIT! FORGET ABOUT THAT STUPID FILM!!!
YEAH.
IT'S ALL READY TO GO, SIR.
OH YEAH! OH! OOOH! AAHH!
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY.
A LITLE MIDNIGHT NOOKIE GOING ON.
WHAT IN THE WORLD? OH, I SEE ...

I'LL BE HE DIDN'T SEE THAT FILM.

IT JUST GOES TO SHOW YOU THAT THERE ARE THINGS MORE IMPORTANT IN LIFE THAN STUPID NEWSREELS. LIKE NOOKIE ...

NOW THAT I KNOW, I ALSO KNOW WHAT I MUST DO.

CAPTAIN BEN CHRISTIAN MADAWAY .... YOU KNOW, I WOULDN'T KNOW HIS NAME IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THAT FILM

PER THE WARRIOR'S CODE, MADAWAY MUST DIE IF I AM TO AVENGE MY DISHONOR!

FROM THAT DAY ON I TRULY HATED MADAWAY.

WE WERE DISPATCHED TO OKINAWA TO PROVIED COVER FOR THE KAMIKAZES.

HOWEVER, MY CHANCE TO REDEEM MY LOST HONOR WOULD HAVE TO WAIT.

YOU HEAR? I WON'T LET YOU DIE!!

BUT I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU DIE, SIR! NOT UNTIL YOU CAN AVENGE YOURSELF!

DON'Y WORRY! I'LL BE FINE!

... WHO KNOWS THAT NOTHING CAN GO WRONG WITH ANY ENGINE ON WHICH HE HAS LAID HIS HANDS.

HE HAD THE UNSHAKEABLE CONFIDENCE OF A MASTER MECHANIC ...

BRRRN-BR-BRRN-BRN-BRRRRRR-BRN-BRN

?!?

WHAT THE HELL? THIS THING ISN'T RUNNING RIGHT!

I'M SORRY, GUYS. I WISH I COULD GO WITH YOU.

THIS IS LT. HATTORI! SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH MY ENGINE! I'VE GOT TO TURN BACK!

OH, THAT'S JUST LT. KAWAI SARU!* DIDN'T YOU SEE THAT AMERICAN NEWSREEL?

WHO DROPPED OUT?

I DON'T KNOW! LEMME SEE!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY DAMN ENGINE?!

SOMEBODY HELP ME! I'VE GOT A HELLCAT ON MY TAIL AND AAAAHHH---!!

THIS IS OKINAWA! COME IN! HOW ARE YOU--

HOW 'BOUT YOU RIDE ON MY BOMB RACK THE NEXT TIME?!?!

NOT LET ME DIE, HUH?! WHAT ABOUT MY DAMN MOTOR?!

THIS IS OKINAWA. IS THERE ANYONE?

ANY-ONE OUT THERE?

DIVINE WIND** FLIGHT, COME IN! ANYONE!

(*) KAWAI SARU – NI. "SCARED MONKEY"

(**) "DIVINE WIND" – THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF KAMIKAZE

LATER ...

I'VE GONE OVER EVERY INCH OF THAT ENGINE! IT CAN'T FAIL THIS TIME, SIR! JUST YOU WAIT AND SEE!

WELL I'M NOT HOLDING MY BREATH, AND IF IT FAILS THIS TIME--

OH, BUT IT WON'T! IT WON'T, SIR!!

I COULDN'T BE A KAMIKAZE PILOT.

THAT'S A TOUGH JOB.

ZEROS PACKED FULL OF EXPLO-SIVES.

NOTHING BUT DUCKS.

AWWW SHIT! NOT AGAIN!!

BRWWW-BR-BR-BR-BRW--

... TO HELP THEN WE CAN'T DO THIS!

I'M NOT DROPPING OUT THIS TIME! IF I'M NOT THERE ...

LATER ...

BOOM!

WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?! I THOUGHT YOU SAID THAT ENGINE WOULD RUN RIGHT! WELL IT DIDN'T!!

I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAME BACK! AND ALL BECAUSE MY FUCKING ENGINE WAS ABOUT TO DIE ON ME!!

NOT A SINGLE PLANE MADE IT!

THE MISSION FAILED! AGAIN!!

I HAD TO DROP OUT AGAIN!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WRONG I DID MY BEST ... AND YET ....

I ... I ... I'M SORRY, SIR.

AMERICAN P-38, LIKE WHAT SHOT ME DOWN. ARMY LAND BASED PLANE.

I'LL BET IT CAME FROM OKINAWA. THE AMERICANS MUST HAVE THE AIRSTRIP OPERATIONAL. SHIT.

YEAH. SHIT.

AMERI-CAN RECON PLANE!

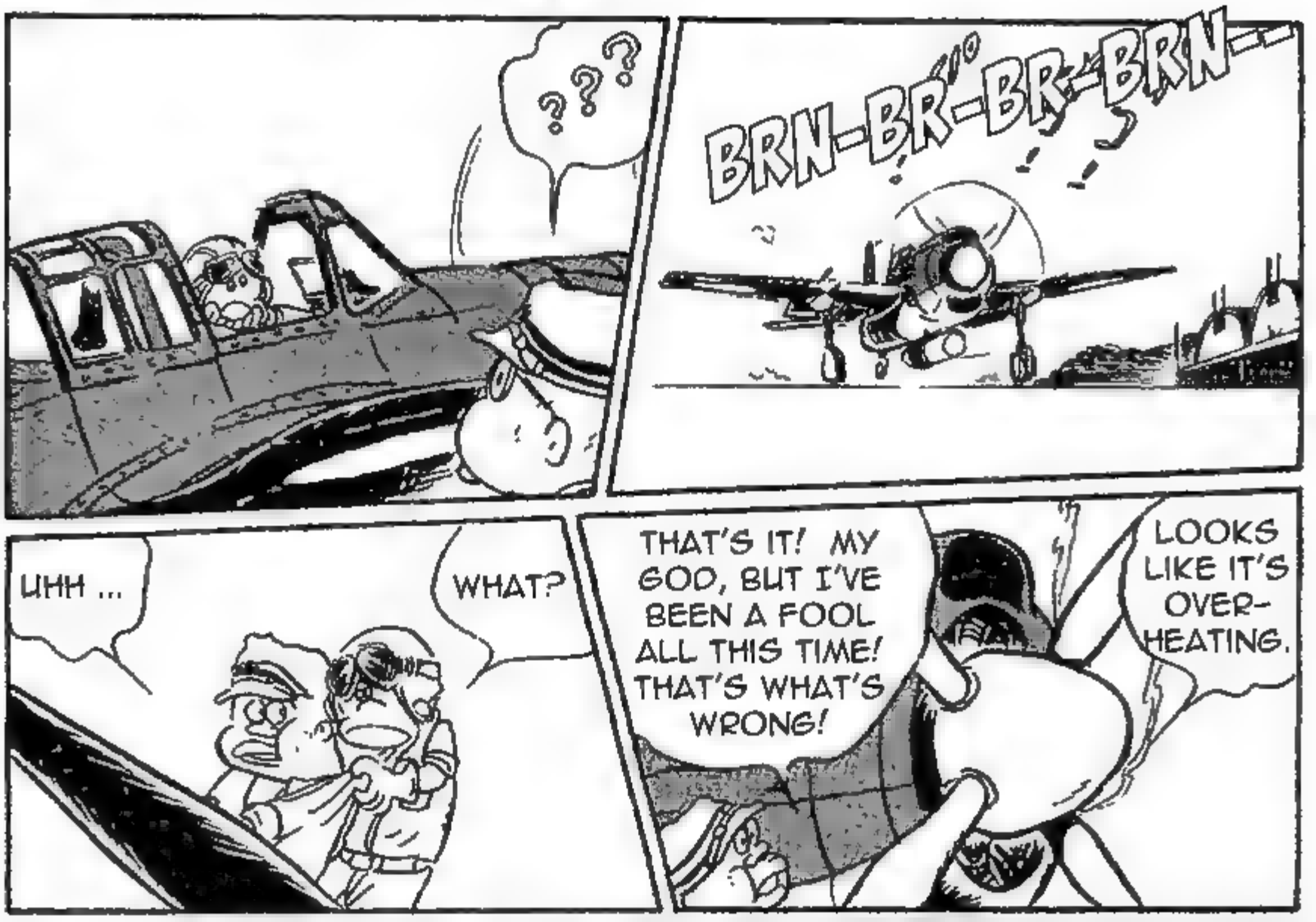
AGAIN, LATER ...

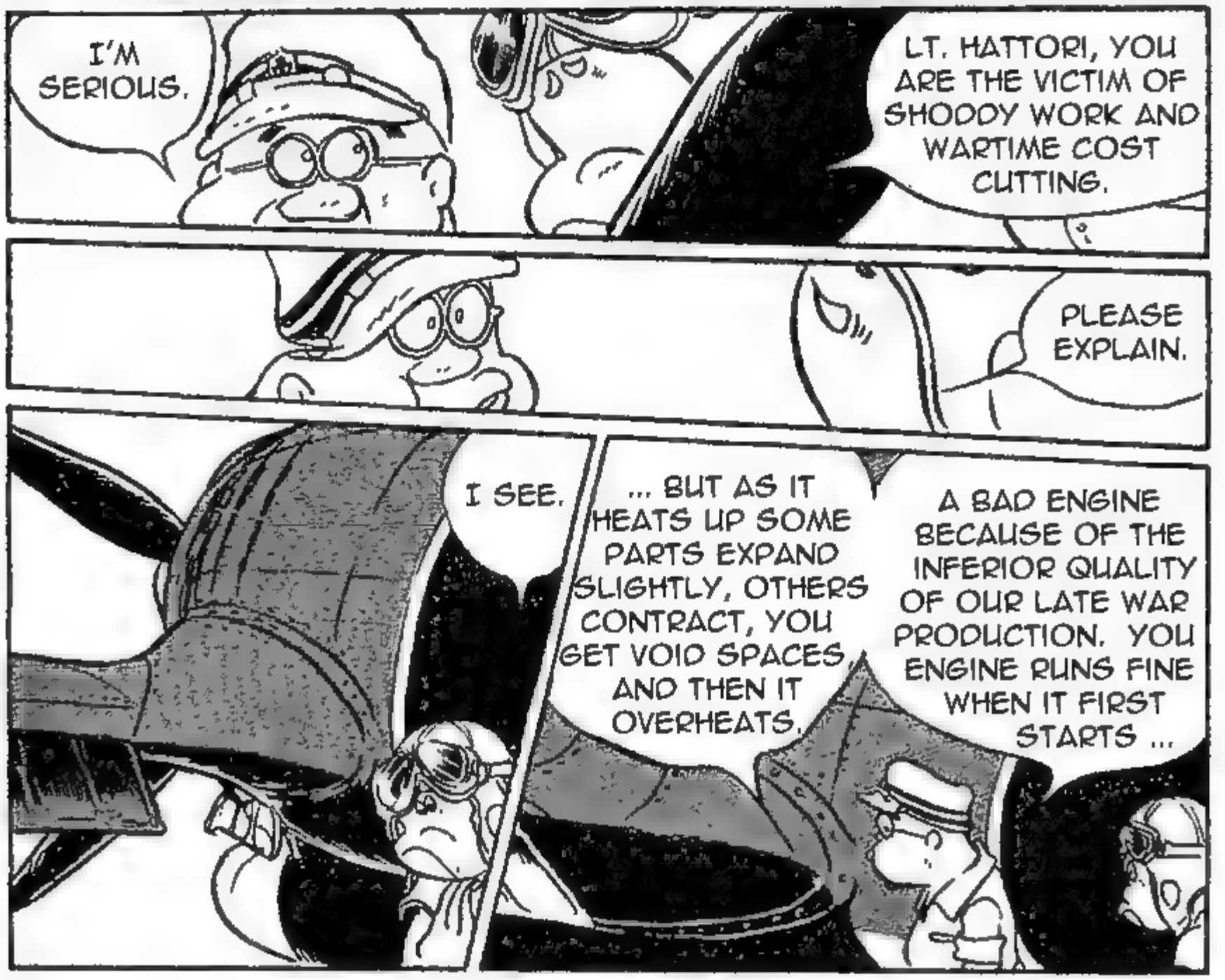
THIS SHIDEN IS IN AS PERFECT A CONDITION AS I CAN MAKE IT, SIR!

I'VE GONE OVER THIS THREE TIMES WITH MY FINEST FINE TOOTH COMB, SIR! I CAN'T FIND ANYTHING WRONG!

GO, GO, GO, GO! DON'T LET ME DOWN!!

?


???
BRN-BR-BR-BRN-
UHH ...
WHAT?
THAT'S IT! MY GOD, BUT I'VE BEEN A FOOL ALL THIS TIME! THAT'S WHAT'S WRONG!
LOOKS LIKE IT'S OVER-HEATING.


I'M SERIOUS.
LT. HATTORI, YOU ARE THE VICTIM OF SHODDY WORK AND WARTIME COST CUTTING.
PLEASE EXPLAIN.
I SEE.
... BUT AS IT HEATS UP SOME PARTS EXPAND SLIGHTLY, OTHERS CONTRACT, YOU GET VOID SPACES AND THEN IT OVERHEATS.
A BAD ENGINE BECAUSE OF THE INFERIOR QUALITY OF OUR LATE WAR PRODUCTION. YOU ENGINE RUNS FINE WHEN IT FIRST STARTS ...

YOU'RE RIGHT.

YOU KNOW IF WE TRY TO PRESS THIS THEY'LL SHOOT US BOTH.

BEN CHRISTIAN MADAWAY. I'LL NEVER FORGET HIS NAME NOR HIS FACE. I WILL KILL HIM HOWEVER AND WHENEVER I CAN.

YOU KNOW, NOW THAT THE P-38S ARE COMING HERE, MAYBE THAT MANDRAKE GUY WILL COME HERE TOO. YOU MIGHT GET YOUR CHANCE AFTER ALL.

HE MUST COME. I MUST HAVE THE CHANCE TO RESTORE MY LOST HONOR.

HE MIGHT COME.

THANKS.

I DON'T BLAME YOU. NOT ONE BIT.

COME, MADAWAY! HATTORI IS WAITING FOR YOU!

AND SO SPRING PASSED INTO SUMMER, AND WITH THAT ...

AUGUST 15, 1945

NO ...
NO!!!

WAS THIS WHY I WAS SPARED BY A FAULTY ENGINE?! TO LIVE THE REST OF MY LIFE IN SHAME, FOREVER BRANDED A COWARD?!?!

THIS .... THIS IS ADDING INSULT TO INJURY! THIS IS MORE HUMILIATION THAN I CAN BEAR!!!

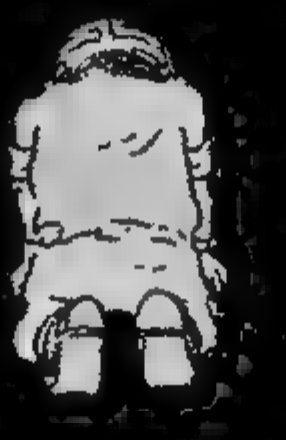
WE COMMAND ALL OUR PEOPLE FORTH-WITH TO CEASE HOSTILITIES, TO LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS, AND SURRENDER ...

THEY SAY THAT PEOPLE EXPERIENCE MOMENTS IN THEIR LIVES WHEN EVERYTHING GOES BLACK BEFORE THEIR EYES.

THAT'S HOW I WAS ON THAT TERRIBLE DAY.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I HAD NO IDEA WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO. I ONLY KNEW WHAT I *HAD* TO DO. BUT HOW WAS I TO DO IT?

THIS HAD BECOME A SERIOUS DILEMNA ....



SEVERAL WEEKS LATER ....

BUT WHY ARE THEY COMING HERE TOO?

THEY FLEW IN WITH MACARTHUR AT ATSUGI AIRFIELD.

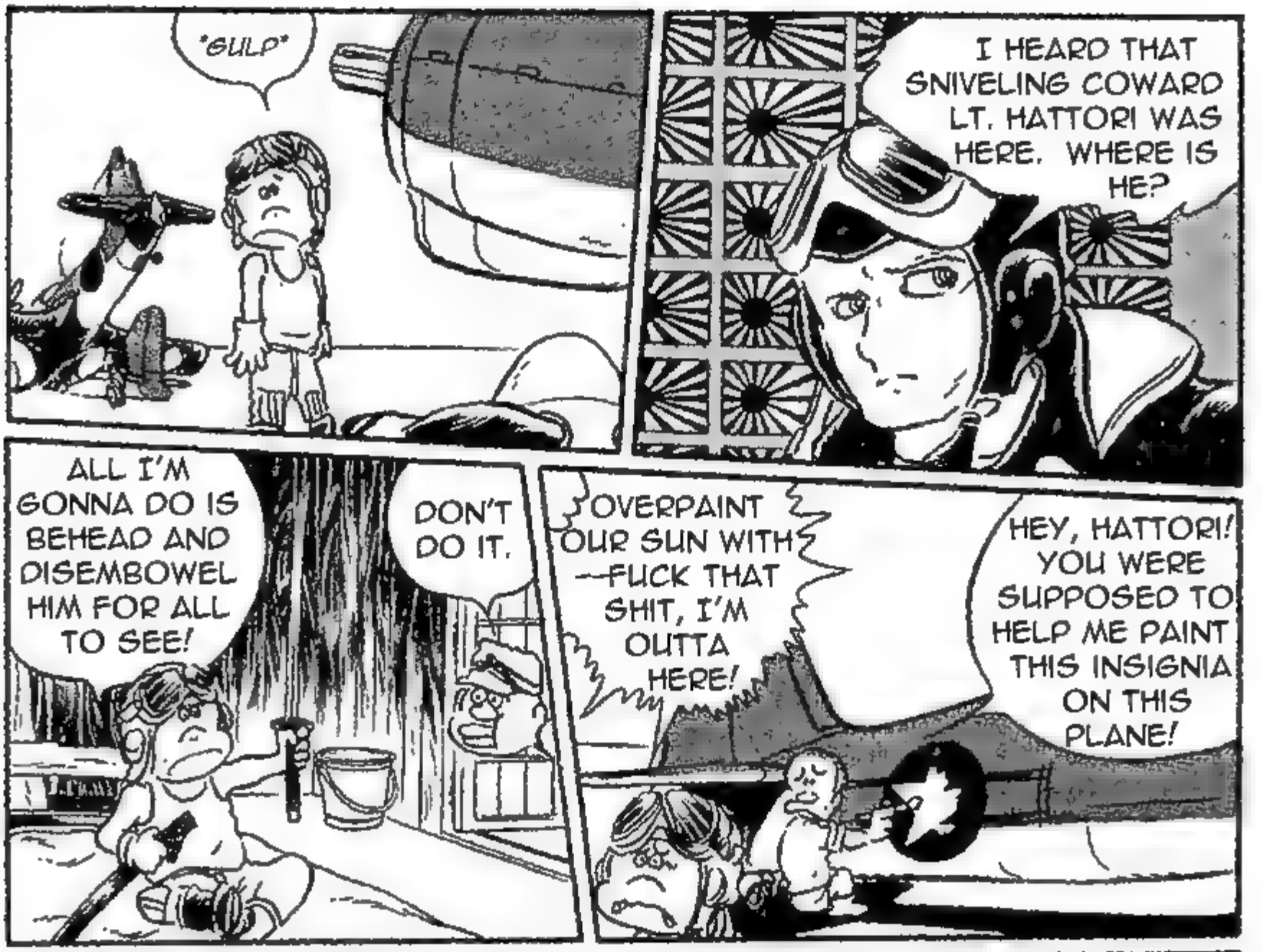
IT'S A FLIGHT OF P-38S!

I WONDER IF ... OH NO ....

ALL RIGHT! WHERE ARE ALL OF THE LITTLE COWARDS THAT USED TO FLY PLANES FROM HERE?

I WAS TOO DRUNK AT THE TIME TO SEE.

OH BOY.


"GULP"
I HEARD THAT SNIVELING COWARD LT. HATTORI WAS HERE. WHERE IS HE?
ALL I'M GONNA DO IS BEHEAD AND DISEMBOWEL HIM FOR ALL TO SEE!
DON'T DO IT.
OVERPAINT OUR SUN WITH—FUCK THAT SHIT, I'M OUTTA HERE!
HEY, HATTORI! YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO HELP ME PAINT THIS INSIGNIA ON THIS PLANE!
HIS MAJESTY WAS NOT PUBLICALLY HUMILIATED!!!
THE WAR IS OVER. THEY WON. AS HIS MAJESTY ASKED US, YOU'VE GOT--
DON'T LET HIM GET TO YOU SIR, PLEASE. NOW LISTEN TO ME.
AS LONG AS I CAN TAKE THAT BASTARD MADAWAY WITH ME!!!
IF YOU DO THIS THEY'RE GOING TO KILL YOU.
I FOUND HIM. NOW I CAN BRING MY OWN WAR TO ITS END BY KILLING THE LAST COWARD WHO FLEW FOR THE JAPANESE!

ALSO, BOTH SIDES HONOR THE RESULTS NO MATTER WHAT.

ALL OFF THE RECORD AND NO ONE CAN INTERFERE.

WHAT?! MADAWAY *WANTS* A DUEL WITH ME?

I ... I'VE GOT TO TO INSPECT THE FAR SIDE OF THE BASE WITH MY ENTIRE COMMAND STAFF. I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHEN I'M BACK.

MADAWAY ... YOU'RE NUTS. HOWEVER, I'M A TEXAS MAN, AND THIS KIND OF THING RUNS IN MY BLOOD.

!

I'M NOT IN COMMAND ANYMORE, HATTORI. IT'S YOUR CALL.

SIR?

THIS IS MY ONE CHANCE, THE ONE I WAS HOPING AND PRAYING FOR, AND I'M *NOT* GOING TO BLOW IT!

ARE YOU?

READY TO DIE, JAP?

BUT NOT IN THAT REPAINTED PLANE! THAT'S DISHONOR-ABLE!

YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO DO IT?!

YOU ARE GOING TO DIE AND BY MY HATTORI. SEE YOU IN THE AIR.

THAT'S MY OLD PLANE! BUT IT WON'T DO EITHER! THAT BAD ENGINE! DON'T WE HAVE ANY GOOD PLANES ...

YOU'RE IN LUCK. LOOK FAMILIAR?

HE'S JUST AN ARROGANT BASTARD AND ALL OF THESE ARE LIES, LIES, LIES!

OOH! LOOKIE THERE! THEY STILL HAVE ONE PLANE LEFT WITH A MEATBALL!

YEP! THIS ONE DOESN'T OVERHEAT, AND THE GUNS ARE FULL TOO! YOU'VE GOT THE LAST TRUE SHIDEN LEFT!

YOU REPLACED IT!

WELL HOW DO THEY THINK WE FEEL?!?! GRRRR ....

THAT WAS NOT A SMART THING TO DO. YOU KNOW HOW THEY FEEL--

AND THAT THING ON THAT POLE IS A PAIR OF POLKA DOT PANTIES!!!

HATTORI'S GROWN A BACKBONE. THIS COULD GET INTERESTING.

WELL, WELL ....

TO REGAIN HIS LOST HONOR, AND TO TAKE OUT THE MAN WHO TOOK IT FROM HIM.

BECAUSE IT'S THE ONE CHANCE HE HAS LEFT TO REDEEM HIMSELF.

WHY IS LIEUTENANT HATTORI DOING THIS?

SUIT YOURSELF, HATTORI! HIGH ALTITUDE OR LOW ALTITUDE, MY P-38 CAN HANDLE BOTH AND I'M GONNA KILL YOU EITHER WAY!!

THAT PUTS YOU AT AN ADVANTAGE, MADAWAY! I'M STAYING DOWN HERE!

LET'S CLIMB UP TO 10,000 METERS AND THEN WE'LL START!

DODGING THAT WAS EASY FOR MY SHIDEN!

SO YOU'LL GIVE ME THE ADVANTAGE?! THEN I'LL USE IT!!!

AND IT HAS A BIT OF AN EDGE OVER YOU DOWN HERE!

HEY YOU TWO! DON'T FLY OFF! WE WANT TO SEE THE WHOLE THING!!!

IT HAD TO COME TO AN END AND IT DID ON THAT DAY ... AND I WAS THE ONE WHO ENDED IT ONCE AND FOR ALL.

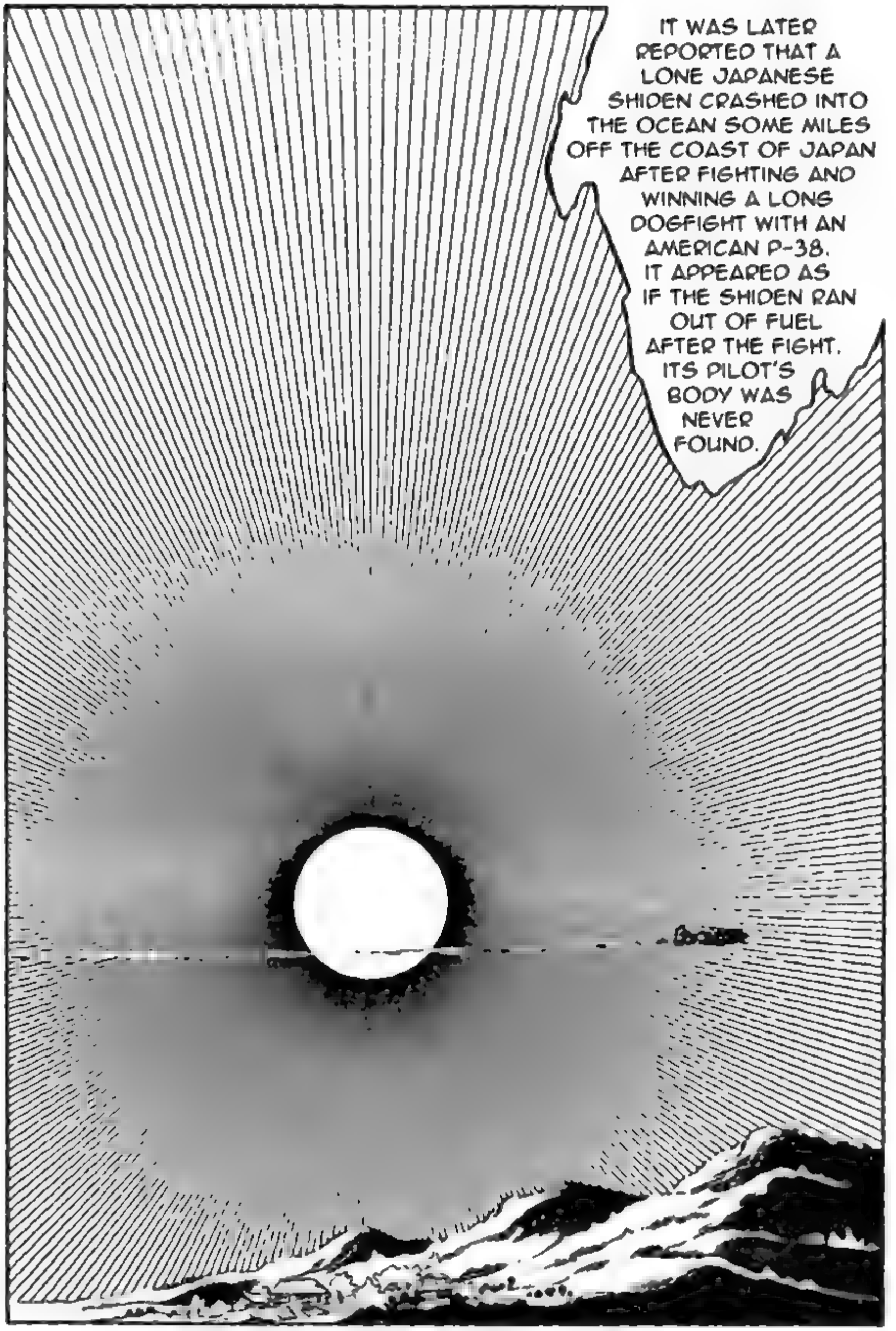
THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD SAY I SHOULD HAVE JUST GOTTEN OVER IT. I COULDN'T, BECAUSE OF WHO AND WHAT I WAS. I JUST COULDN'T ...

WE FLEW AND WE FOUGHT UNTIL WE WERE BOTH LOW ON FUEL AND DOWN TO OUR LAST ROUNDS ...

... BUT MINE WAS THE LAST SHOT FIRED.

WHY DID WE BOTH LEAVE AND GO OUT TO SEA TO FINISH OUR FIGHT?

BECAUSE THIS WAS A FIGHT BETWEEN MEN, NOT A PUBLIC SPECTACLE FOR POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT.



ENDE

SHIDEN (PURPLE LIGHTNING)

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MANDELISMS

At forty-nine (49) pages "Shiden" ties with Volume 4's "My Youth in Arcadia" as the longest story - or stories - in *The Cockpit*. There are longer ones, such as "Sand and Scotch" among others in later volumes, but Matsumoto split those into multiple parts That said "Shiden" has three distinct parts to its tale, each set within a distinct time period The first part takes place in late 1944 and serves to set up the second and third parts, which take place in the spring and summer of 1945 before the end of the war and early fall of 1945 after the war has ended Also, and like the earlier "Zero" in Volume Three (which I renamed "Zero Pilot" in my English adaptation), "Shiden's" focus is not on the aircraft named in the title but on a particular pilot who flies one That man is Lt. Hattori, and both the troubling situation in which he finds himself and how after much trial and tribulation he finally resolves it is the true focus of this tale

It is probably far harder for us today, given how many decades lie between us and the war and the heyday of Imperial Japan, to truly understand what Lt. Hattori goes through, how it affected him, and what he's willing to go through and put up with to eventually get him to the point where he can do something about it. Those of us who have been in analagous situations have some idea. You know what I'm talking about. Screwing up at a major sporting or public event, being degraded or humilated over whatever by friends or family or a mate or whoever, and so on It's very easy for others to say, "Just get over it" -- especially those who are the ones causing the most hurt, who either can't or refuse to see things from the victim's point-of-vew What most Westerns will find very difficult to grasp, especially today, is the extra layer of shame in Lt Hattori's case caused by the Japanese warrior code of bushido, which the Imperial military actively championed and to whose strict standards most of its members held themselves at the time Bushido doesn't allow for cowards Cowards deserve to die You have to add in that very important factor whenever you try to put youselves into Lt. Hattori's shoes Thanks to the wartime "sport" of Captain Madaway and his friends Lt. Hattori was publically branded a coward in the worst possible way and for the entire world to see It was no fault of his own and he was no coward, but he was made to look like one and there was no possible way for him to defend his honor given how it was first done and then later presented to the world. There is absolutely no way Lt. Hattori can "let it go" because doing so means he has to live with being branded a coward for the rest of his life To make matters even worse, certain things that happen to him after that (his faulty airplane engine) serve only to enhance this unwanted and undesired perception in the eyes of his fellow pilots, his friends, his countrymen. He can't "let it go." He simply can't.

Just as Lt. Hattori can't let go of what was done to him, so too can't Captain Madalay let go of doing it to him One might easily brush this off as the typically arrogant typecasting with which Matsumoto portrays common American servicemen (something with which he had to deal with in his youth in postwar occupied Japan, I must add) but remember that with Matsumoto's tales you've got to watch out for that extra hidden layer. It's definitely here with Madalay, who has become so cocky and sure of his sense of superiority over "cowardly" Japanese pilots that he's become to believe his own stories about them. They're bullshit, of course, and he has to pay for his mistake hard way after challenging Hattori to an aerial duel after the war and then finding out too late that not only is his opponent just as qualified a fighter pilot as he but his past actions have made his foe dead set determined to kill him -- and he does too Overweening arrogance has been the downfall of many a villain both real and fictional Captain Madaway is no different than the rest.

While some of you may be skeptical about Lt Hattori's engine problems, and I know my imperfect English adaptation may have helped to cloud this part of the story, rest assured that this is a very real phenomena I saw it myself with a replacement car engine for my 1984 Pontiac Trans-Am many decades ago, that ran just fine when it] first started but ran hot once it warmed up and the fault was finally traced to void spaces in an imperfectly made engine block that only opened up whenever it got hot I know others have seen this too with other types of engines, and I'm sure that if you talk to your local shade tree mechanic or professional down the street they could tell you some tales along these lines too So there you go on that

Finally and on an important side note, this is the first story in *The Cockpit* where at least part of it takes place after the end of World War II I say that because as the series continues we're going to get more of these, with some having the whole story take place after the end of the war or in one case flashing back to the war from the postwar period There's even a tale or two that takes place before the war I just wanted to alert you to this new addition to the standard storytelling format as our mutual journey through *The Cockpit* continues

TALES FROM THE COCKPIT

BLACK WIDOW: THE DEMON MACHINE

ENEMY FORMATION DETECTED! HEADING 1200, ALTITUDE 7500, SPEED 480 KM/H. APPROXIMATELY 60 AIRCRAFT DETECTED. APPEAR TO BE BOMBERS WITH FIGHTER ESCORT!

BLACK WIDOW:
THE DEMON MACHINE

SHINJO RADIO STATION HERE! WE'RE ON FIRE FROM ENEMY BOMBING!

RADAR SHACK 3 HERE! WE'VE HAD TO SHUT DOWN! ANTENNA AND EQUIPMENT DAMAGED!

SOLID CLOUD COVER! AIN'T RADAR BOMBING GREAT?!

M 421

HA-HAH! WE CAN SEE THEM BUT THEY CAN'T SEE US!

THERE WOULDN'T BE, OF COURSE! THE SQUADRON LEADER'S IN TOUCH WITH THEM NOW!

HEY, WHERE'S OUR SPECIAL EYES AND EARS? THERE'S NO SIGN OF HIM.

... OH YEAH, THERE HE IS! I'D-A NEVER SEEN HIM!

LOOK UP.

DAMN, BUT THESE INSECTS ARE LOUD! DO THEY HAVE TO CARRY ON WITH THAT RACKET ALL THE TIME?!

IT'S ALL THEY'VE GOT TO DO. YOU'LL GET USED TO IT.

THAT AND EAT EACH OTHER. IS IT READY YET?

NOPE. NOT YET.

HEY, THESE OLD SIGNS ARE IN ENGLISH!

ALL OF THEM CAME FROM AIRFIELDS WE CAPTURED AND RENAMED AS OUR OWN.

I'D BE THE AMERICANS WOULD BE PISSED TO SEE THIS.

THERE THEY GO. OFF TO BOMB THEM BACK IN KIND, I HOPE.

WE'VE GOT TIME TO BOMB THEM BEFORE THEIRS GET BACK. AFTER ALL, THEY'RE ONLY 500 KILOMETERS AWAY.

AH, IT'S READY! GOOD! YEAH, RADAR HAD THEIR BOMBERS UNTIL IT WAS KNOCKED OUT.

COME ON, EVERYONE, DIG IN! I WANT NO LEFTOVERS, CLEAR?

YOU MAKE IT SOUND SO SHORT AND DON'T FORGET GOING OVER THE OCEAN TOO.

HEY! THOSE DRIED SARDINES ARE MINE! DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH THEM!

YOU CAN HAVE THEM! BLERGH!

YEAH! WE DON'T KNOW WHEN WE'LL EAT THIS GOOD AGAIN!

AS LONG AS THEY'RE CAREFUL, AND IF THERE ARE NO BLACK WIDOWS LURKING ABOUT UP THERE.

THINK THEY CAN PULL IT OFF?

DAMN B-25S! AND IT WAS SUCH A GOOD MEAL!
HEY! GET THIS THING OFF OF ME!! I DIDN'T ORDER ELEPHANT EAR SALAD!!!
JUST FOR ONCE I'D LIKE TO ENJOY MY FIRST GOOD MEAL IN A WHILE WITHOUT BOMBS ON THE SIDE!
DOES IT MATTER, WITH THEM HAVING RADAR SO MUCH BETTER THAN OURS? IT MAY AS WELL BE BROAD DAYLIGHT!
THERE THEY GO, AND HERE COME THE CLOUDS AGAIN.

WELL, WE GOT ALL THE FIRES PUT OUT AND THE WORST OF IT CLEANED UP. I'M AFRAID, THOUGH, THAT THE MESS HALL IS NEVER GOING TO BE THE SAME AGAIN.
IF ONLY THAT HAD BEEN THE ONLY CASUALTY FROM THAT BOMBING.

THIS IS JOKER ONE TO JOKER TWO!

JOKER 1

JAP AIRCRAFT STILL FLYING TO YOUR RIGHT. SINCE I TOOK CARE OF THE OTHER TWO, THIS ONE'S YOURS.

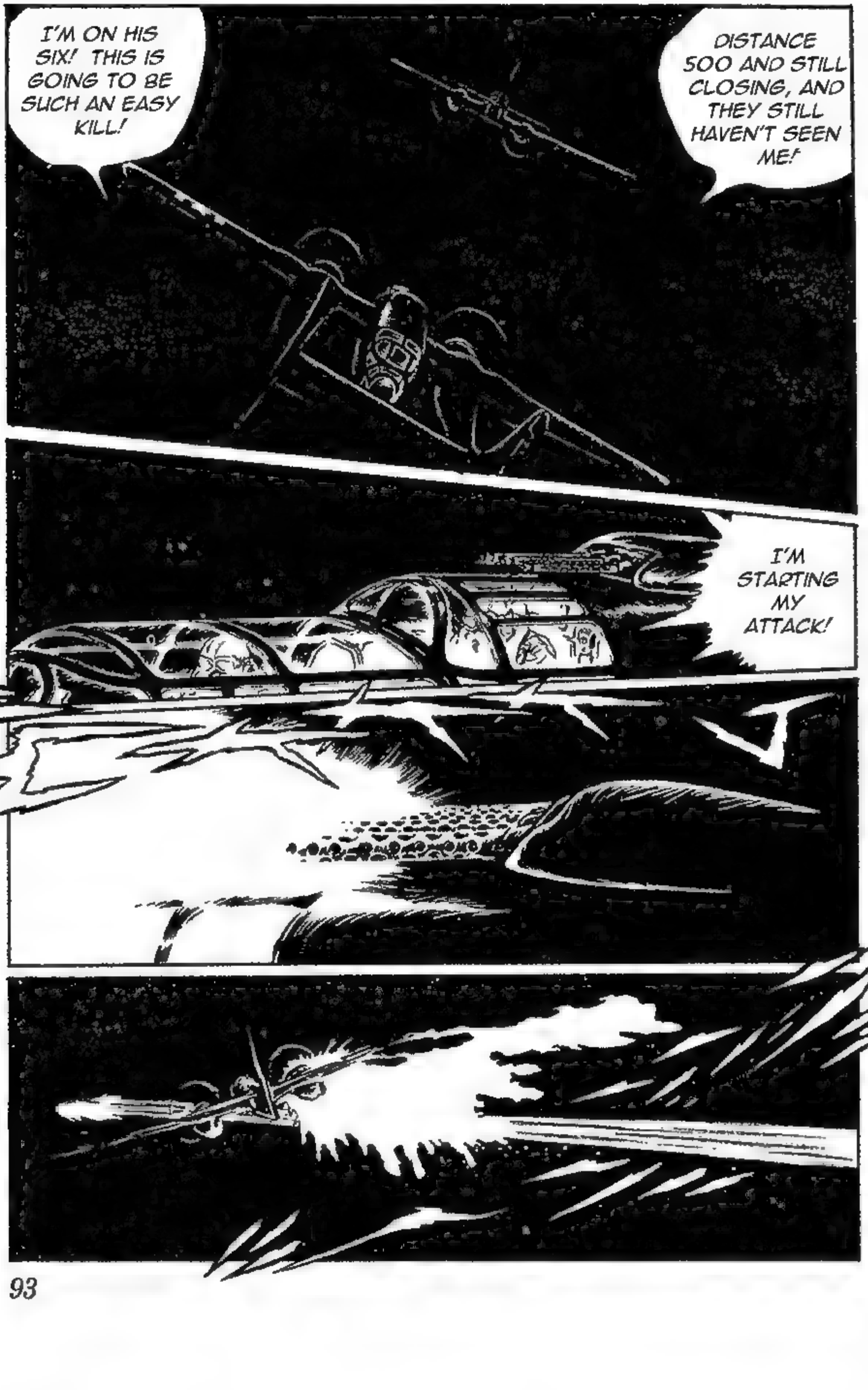
TARGET ACQUIRED! DISTANCE 800, 750 ....

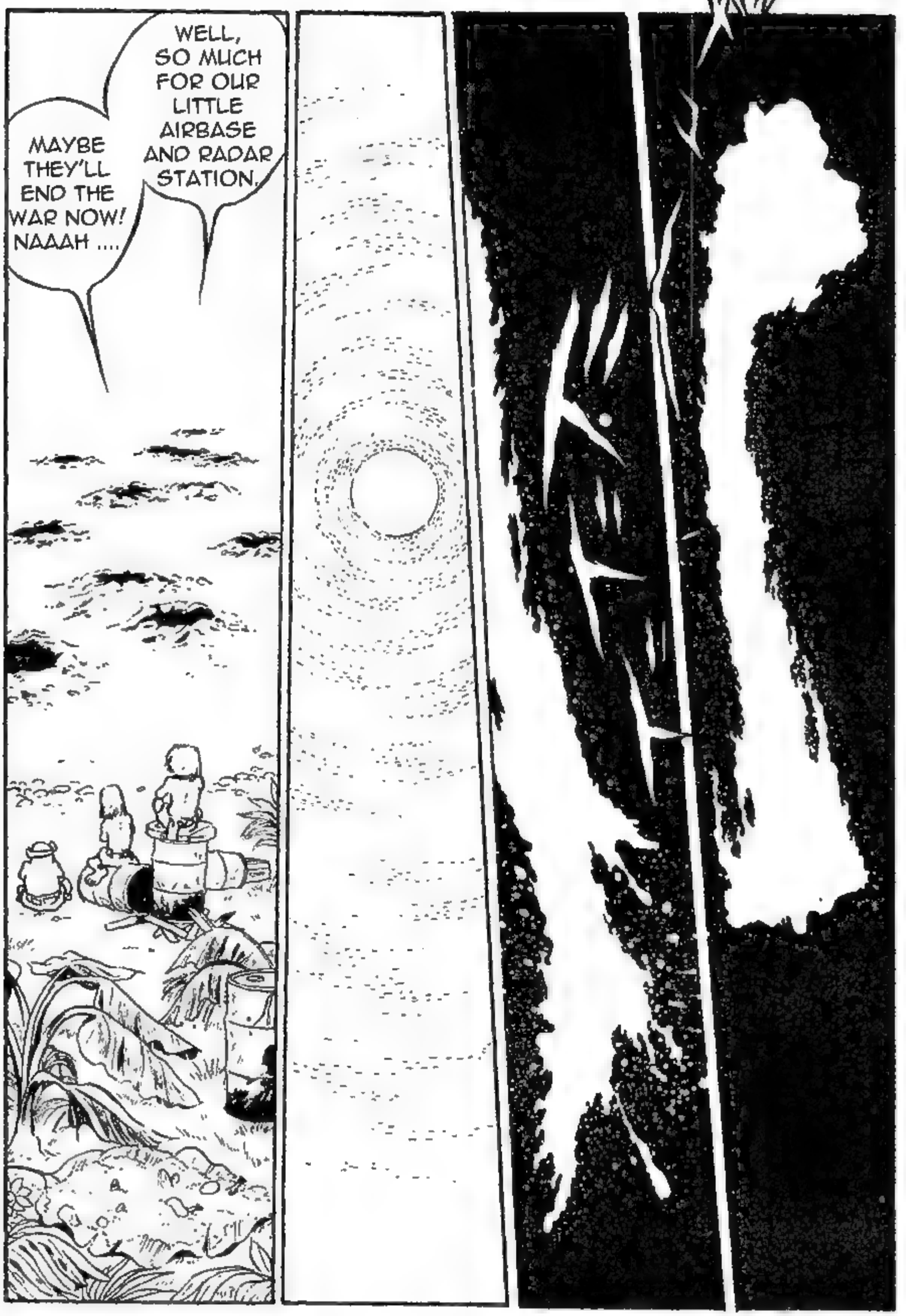
THANKS JOKER ONE! REMIND ME TO BUY YOU A MEAL WHEN WE GET BACK!

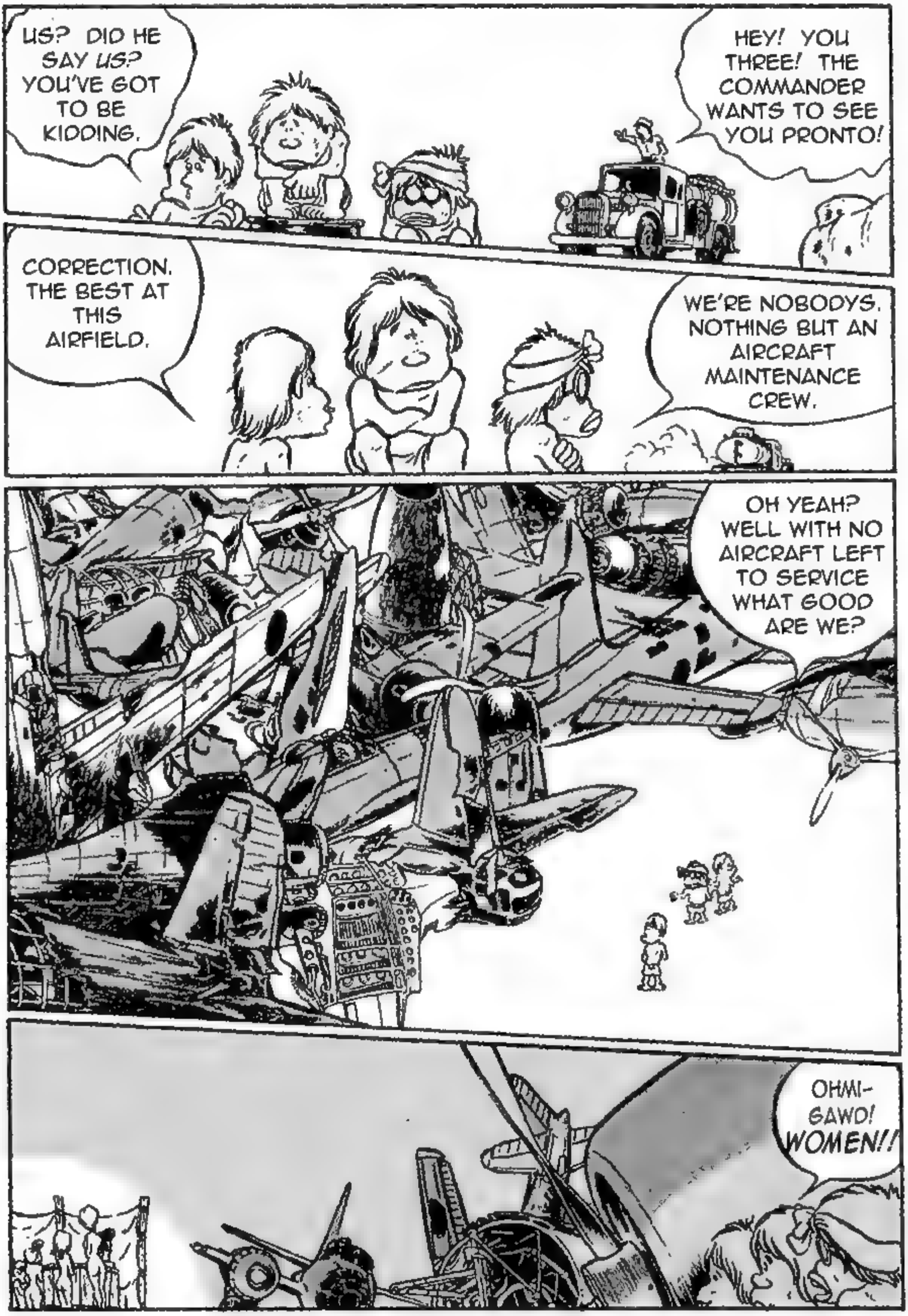
I HAVE VISUAL! IT'S A JAP NIGHT FIGHTER, TYPE "MOONLIGHT*." LOOKS LIKE IT HASN'T SEEN ME YET, BUT IT SOON WILL!

JOKER 1

(*) THE NAKAJIMA J1N1-S GECKO, ALLIED CODE NAME "MOONLIGHT." IT WAS THE PRIMARY JAPANESE NIGHT FIGHTER OF THE WAR AND WAS NOTED FOR ITS UPWARD-FIRING MACHINE GUNS, WHICH IT USED TO DESTROY ENEMY AIRCRAFT BY FIRST DIVING UNDER THEM AND THEN OPENING FIRE.


I'M ON HIS SIX! THIS IS GOING TO BE SUCH AN EASY KILL!
DISTANCE 500 AND STILL CLOSING, AND THEY STILL HAVEN'T SEEN ME!
I'M STARTING MY ATTACK!


WELL, SO MUCH FOR OUR LITTLE AIRBASE AND RADAR STATION,
MAYBE THEY'LL END THE WAR NOW! NAAAH ....


US? DID HE SAY US? YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING.
HEY! YOU THREE! THE COMMANDER WANTS TO SEE YOU PRONTO!
CORRECTION. THE BEST AT THIS AIRFIELD.
WE'RE NOBODYS. NOTHING BUT AN AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE CREW.
OH YEAH? WELL WITH NO AIRCRAFT LEFT TO SERVICE WHAT GOOD ARE WE?
OHMI-GAWD! WOMEN!!

THEY'RE THE ACTRESSES IN THAT SPECIAL TROUPE!

HEY, WE'VE SEEN THEM BEFORE.

ARE-ARE THEY REAL?!

THEY WON'T COME NEAR US GIVEN WHAT WE ARE.

OH, BUT IF I COULD DO IT WITH A GIRL THAT PRETTY JUST ONCE!

MUST'VE JUST GOT HERE AND NEED TO CLEAN UP.

JUST DON'T START CHOKING YOUR CHICKEN OUT HERE.

AT LEAST I CAN ENJOY THE VIEW AND DREAM, DREAM, DREAM ....

WE'RE COMING! I MEAN ... AS IF WE HAD A CHOICE?!

OH SHIT! CAUGHT IN THE ACT! WE'RE DEAD!

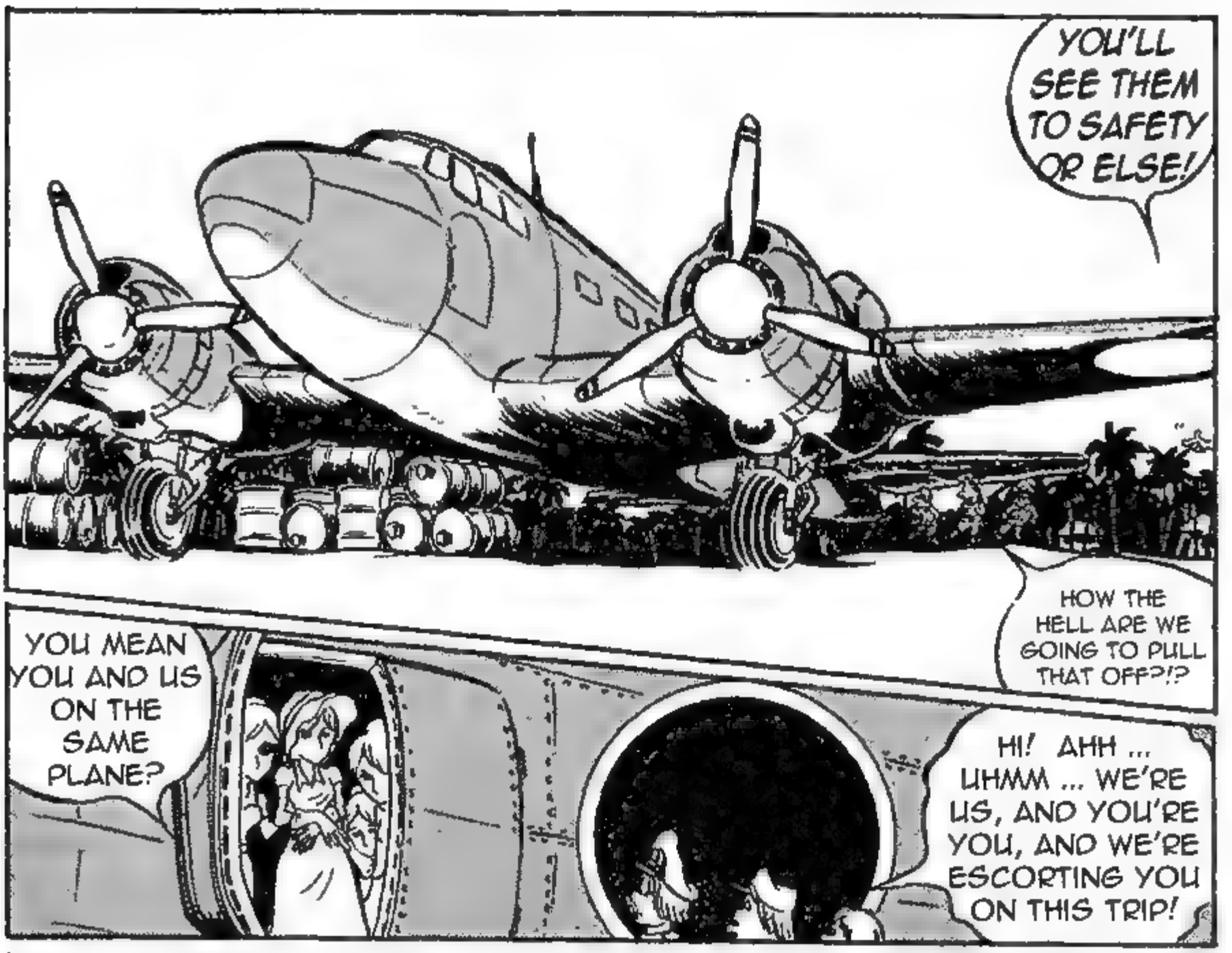
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU THREE DOING?! COME WITH ME RIGHT NOW!!!!!

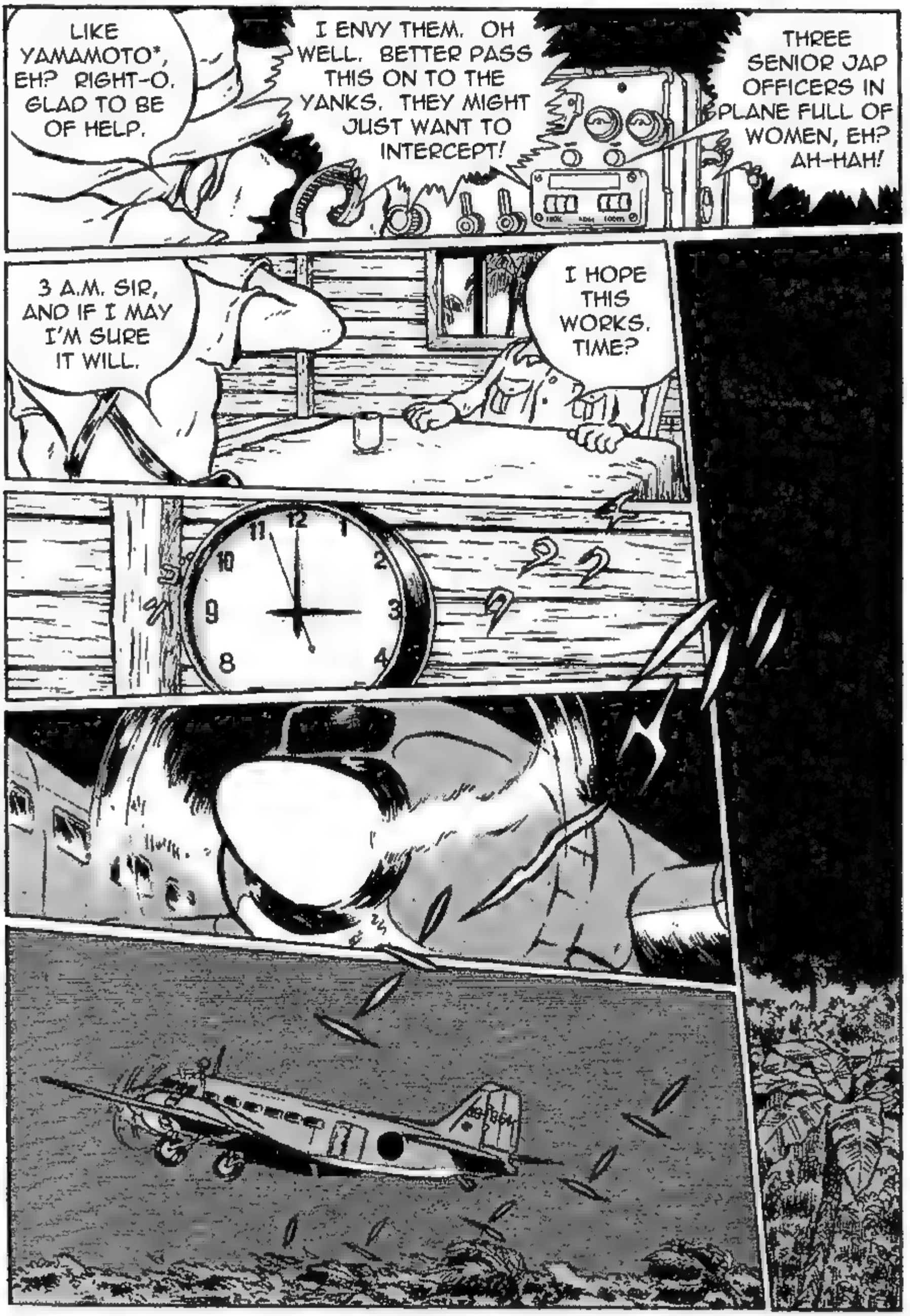
... FOR A JOB OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE! NOW LISTEN!!

KISIMARA! MASIMARA! MASHITA! YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN ...

(*) THE NAKAJIMA L2D "NEW TYPE ZERO" TRANSPORT, ALLIED CODE NAME "TABBY." IT WAS ESSENTIALLY A CLOSE JAPANESE CLONE OF THE VENERABLE DOUGLAS DC-3/C-47 LICENSED BY THEM BEFORE THE WAR. LIKE ITS ALLIED COUSIN IT WOUND UP BEING ONE OF JAPAN'S BEST TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT.

SOMEWHAT LATER ....





99 (*) ADMIRAL ISOKORU YAMAMOTO, THE SENIORMOST JAPANESE NAVAL FLAG OFFICER AND THEIR GREATEST STRATEGIST, WAS KILLED WHEN HIS PERSONAL AIRCRAFT WAS SHOT DOWN BY AMERICAN FIGHTERS ON 18 APRIL 1943.

THE YANKS ARE SENDING THE JOKERS AFTER IT.

YES SIR. IT WAS EITHER A C-47 REPAINTED IN JAP COLORS OR A COPY OF ONE, I'M SURE OF IT.

I GUESS I CAN'T COMPLAIN. IT'S FLYING, AFTER ALL.

THIS PLANE IS MADE FROM TWO DIFFERENT PLANES!

I THINK WE'VE FOUND OUT WHY.

THIS THING CREAKS A LOT.

KEEP YOUR FILTHY PAWS OFF OF OUR SILKY DRAWERS!

LADIES! WE'LL—

I KNOW ONE THING. IF WE GET SHOT DOWN ON THE WAY TO WHEREVER WE'RE GOING I FULLY INTEND TO FALL INTO THE PRETTIEST ONE BEFORE I DIE!

THIS SUCKS! WE'RE ON A PLANE FULL OF WOMEN THAT COULD FALL APART AT ANY MINUTE AND WE CAN'T GET NEAR THEM!

WELL, SO MUCH FOR PROTECTING THEM. I'D GUESS THEY'D RATHER PROTECT THEMSELVES.

I'M WITH YOU!

SAME HERE!

JOKER 2, IF THIS COURSE INFORMATION WE'VE BEEN GIVEN IS CORRECT IT SHOULD BE FLYING IN THE SAME AREA WE SHOT DOWN THAT PLANE LAST NIGHT.

THANKS FOR THE HEADS UP! WE'LL LOOK FOR IT!

SIR! LONG RANGE RADAR CONTACT!

HMM! MIGHT BE PART OF THEIR COMMAND STAFF FOR THIS AREA! PITY ABOUT THE GIRLS, BUT WAR IS WAR. LET'S DO IT!

FURTHERMORE, IT'S CARRYING A TROUP OF JAPANESE ACTRESSES AS WELL AS THREE HIGH-RANKING FLAG OFFICERS!

BR-ADD-A-ADA-ADA-AD-A-ADA-

THE BLOND IS MINE, I TELL YOU!!

THE WOMEN!

HEY!! WHAT ARE YOU-- AAAHHH!!!

GET YOUR FINGERS OUT OF THERE!!

OW! YOU LECH!

OH MY! OH MY! OH ... !

WE'RE TURNING AROUND AND HEADING BACK!

MAYDAY! MAYDAY! WE ARE UNDER ATTACK!

AGREED. DAMN. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE TO CAPTURE THE LOT.

I DON'T THINK HE'S GOING TO LET US FORCE HIM DOWN.

THAT'S A GOOD PILOT FLYING THAT TRANSPORT DESPITE ALL THE DAMAGE WE'VE GIVEN HIM SO FAR!

NOW IT'S MY TURN!

THIS IS JOKER 1! I'M WITHIN GUN RANGE!

BY THE GODS! THEY'RE PUTTING SHELLS THROUGH EVERY PANEL ON THIS PLANE!

DAMN! THEY'RE STILL NOT GOING DOWN! JOKER 2, YOU GET ANOTHER ROUND!

HOLY FUCKIN' SHEE-EEE-IIIT!!!

OKAY!

WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE IN-FLIGHT TURBULENCE!

THANK YOU FOR FLYING JAPAN AIR, LADIES!

IT'S THE SUN!

YES!

SHIT! IT'S DAYLIGHT! AND WE GOT COMPANY!

ZEROS!

THIS IS JOKER FLIGHT! WE'RE BEING AMBUSHED BY A FLIGHT OF ZEROS! THE TRANSPORT HAS ESCAPED!! HELP US!!!

OH!

CRASH!!!!!

I'VE BEEN THINKIN'. I THINK THE COLONEL SET US AND THESE GIRLS UP AS BAIT TO GET THOSE BLACK WIDOWS.

IT WAS A PRETTY SNEAKY PLAN, ACTUALLY.

HELP!!

AT LEAST IT DIDN'T BREAK UP IN FLIGHT!

I WONDER WHY THE COLONEL HAD THEM ON THAT PLANE?

TO MAKE SURE WE GOT ON AND STAYED ON!

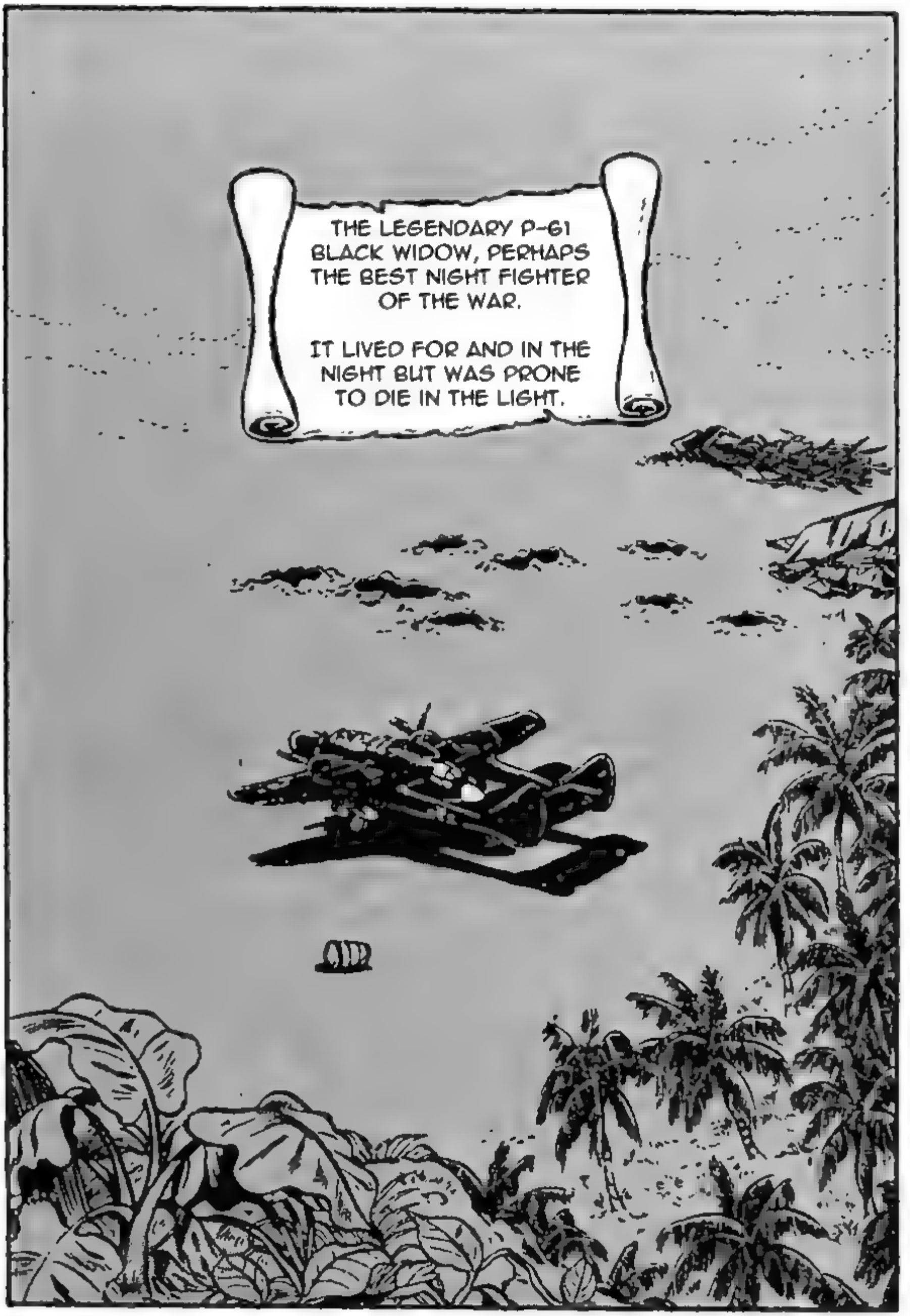
ALL I GOT WAS A RIGHT HOOK.

I GOT SIX! NONE THE SAME!

I GOT TWO!

HRMPH!

AND NOW WE'RE BACK TO BEING THE BASE LOW-LIFES THAT WE WERE.



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ENDE

MANDELISMS

"Black Widow The Death Machine" is the first story in *The Cockpit* series to be framed as a wartime comedy, although it's comedy from the Japanese cultural perspective of its author for a 1970s Japanese audience and not for a contemporary Western one I know there are elements in what's supposed to be the comedic part that some of my fellow Westerners may and probably will find offensive I'm not going to be an apologist for them but I'm not going to omit, obscure, or rewrite them either They are what they are, and just as with some of our own Western wartime comedies that may seem dated and their humor off-color by contempoary standards you have to put and take what is depicted in Matsumoto's tale within its proper context You may never accept it, but perhaps at least you might better understand it and how it was meant to work under those conditions 'Nuff said there, moving on.

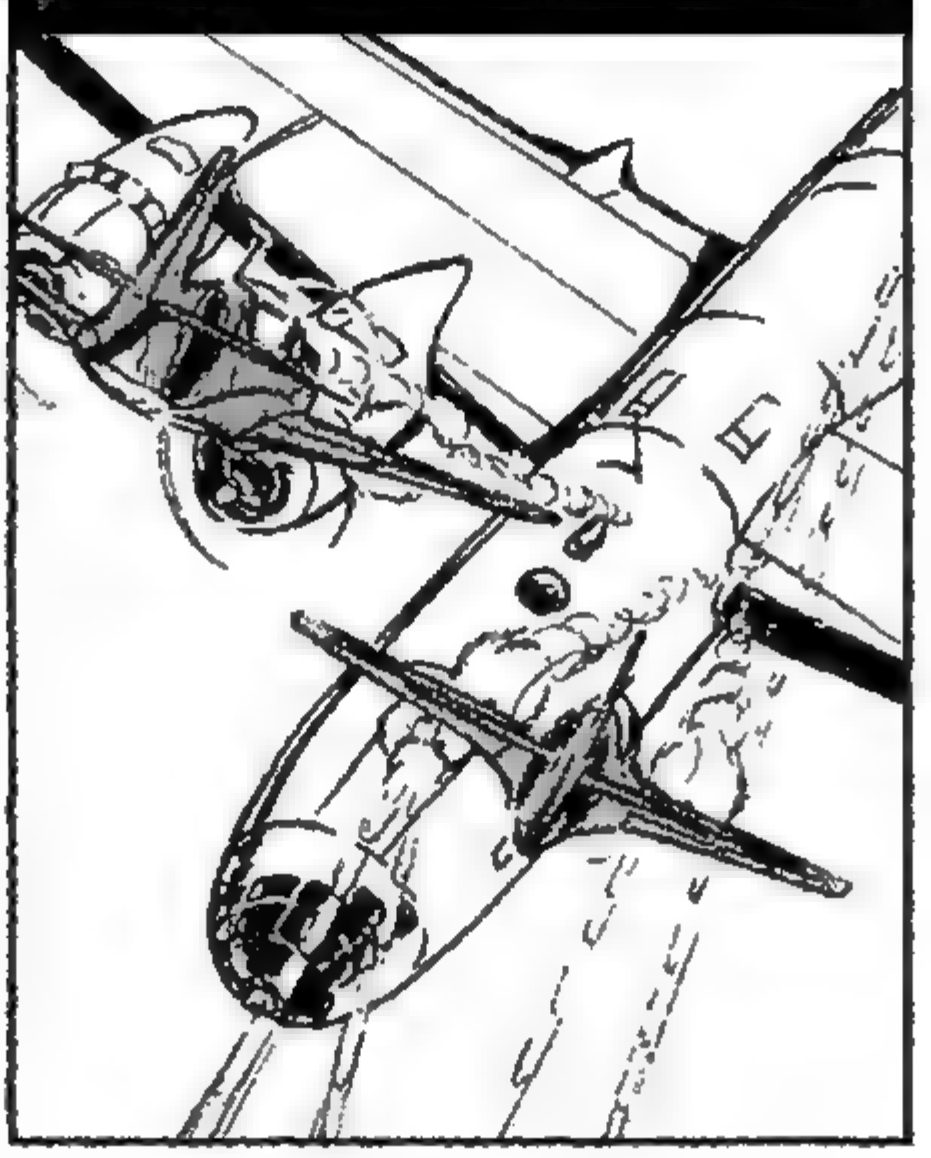
This is also the first tale in *The Cockpit* series to feature an American World War II aircraft as the "star" piece of technology in the story, and that is the very formidable North American P-61 Black Widow We need to give Matsumoto his due for correctly depicting it for the fearsome opponent that it was in the night skies during the war Of course he comes up with a way for the Japanese to beat it in his tale given his intended Japanese audience at the time (grin-and-wink), but there again it takes a helluva plan to defeat a helluva plane -- or two of them in this case

One must also give credit to Masumoto for keeping his audience guessing right up until the end as to what's really going on with our "heroic" trio of Kisimara, Masimara, and Mashita, or Rufus, Doofus, and Goofus as I like to call them (chuckle) They are definitely not the nicest nor the sharpest tools in the drawer, but like servicemen everywhere around the world throughout history they know a good thing when they see it and are quick to take advantage of it as best they can whenever they can We've seen this before in Matsumoto's military tales going all the way back to Volume One's "The Owen Stanley Witch" and the antics of the "Betty" bomber crew as they lounge about waiting to be called up for their next mission It's one of Matsumoto's little touches that help set *The Cockpit* apart from typical military manga or actual wartime propaganda, and that is touching upon what common servicemen are going through at given times and how they act and react depending on what's happening in any of his tales That's another thing on which you can keep an eye as our mutual journey through *The Cockpit* unfolds

Two more things before I close First, I had to rewrite some of the dialogue in places given the utter gibberish that Google Translate AI was throwing at me in those so what was happening with the plot would be more clear That's been a constant problem as I've been doing these and I've tried to let you know whenever it happens I probably could have gotten away with just a simple rewrite but I wanted to make clear what was happening given how the plot of this particular tale develops Second, I deliberately obscured both the date and location of this tale Early on in the original text as Rufus, Doofus, and Goofus are preparing to cook their meal, one of them mentions that the English text painted signs that they're burning for the fire used to be part of Kojiyo Airfield That's on the island of Okinawa, which would set this tale during the American invasion of Okinawa in 1945. However, the tale also implies that Kojiyo was in the possession of the Americans before the Japanese and that's historically incorrect Okinawa was part of the Japanese "homeland" of islands and the Americans never had an airbase there until they captured Kojiyo Airfield as part of the invasion That's why I deliberately obscured both the date and location Personally I favor moving this tale to 1944 and the retaking of the Philippines, as there are plenty of airfields there once operated by the Americas which the Japanese took when they seized control of the Philippines from late 1941 to early 1942, and you can look up a list of those if you want There may be other Pacific theater alternate locations that might work just as well, but I'll let you research those on your own

TALES FROM THE COCKPIT

MANEUVERING BELOW 10,000 METERS



HE'S RIGHT.

YOUR DAD WAS SHITTIN' YOU. THERE AIN'T NO ELEPHANTS IN JAPAN.

MY DAD ONCE TOLD ME HE HAD ELEPHANT MEAT IN JAPAN BEFORE THE WAR.

FUNNY, NO JAP PLANES.

MY GRANDPA DID THE SAME SHIT. HE USED TO BRAG HE CAUGHT A WHALE BUT HE NEVER DID.

I KNOW, BUT MAYBE SOME PLACE SERVED IT. ANYWAY, I KNOW ONCE WE FINALLY GET OVER THERE.

I DON'T LIKE THIS.

WELL HOW ARE YOU EVER GOING TO FIND THAT PLACE THAT SERVES ELEPHANT ONCE THEY FIND OUT YOU'RE LYING ABOUT THEM?

I FIGURE AFTER THE WAR AND WE'VE FINALLY POUNDED THOSE LITTLE PIGS INTO THE GROUND WE CAN SAY WHATEVER WE WANT TO ABOUT THEM, RIGHT?

GUYS, SOMETHING'S WRONG!

I KNOW WHAT I'M GONNA DO ONCE I GET THERE. GET A GEISHA UNDER EACH ARM AND FUCK 'EM SILLY!

I'LL FIND IT, TRUST ME! EVER SINCE I WAS A KID I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO GO TO JAPAN. NOT FLY OVER IT BUT GO THERE!

WHA-?! OH, SO THE LITTLE SHITS DECIDED TO COME UP AND INTERRUPT OUR CONVERSATION. DON'T WORRY. I'LL BET THEY'RE DOWN TO WIND-UP PLANES BY NOW.

JAP FIGHTERS CLIMBING!

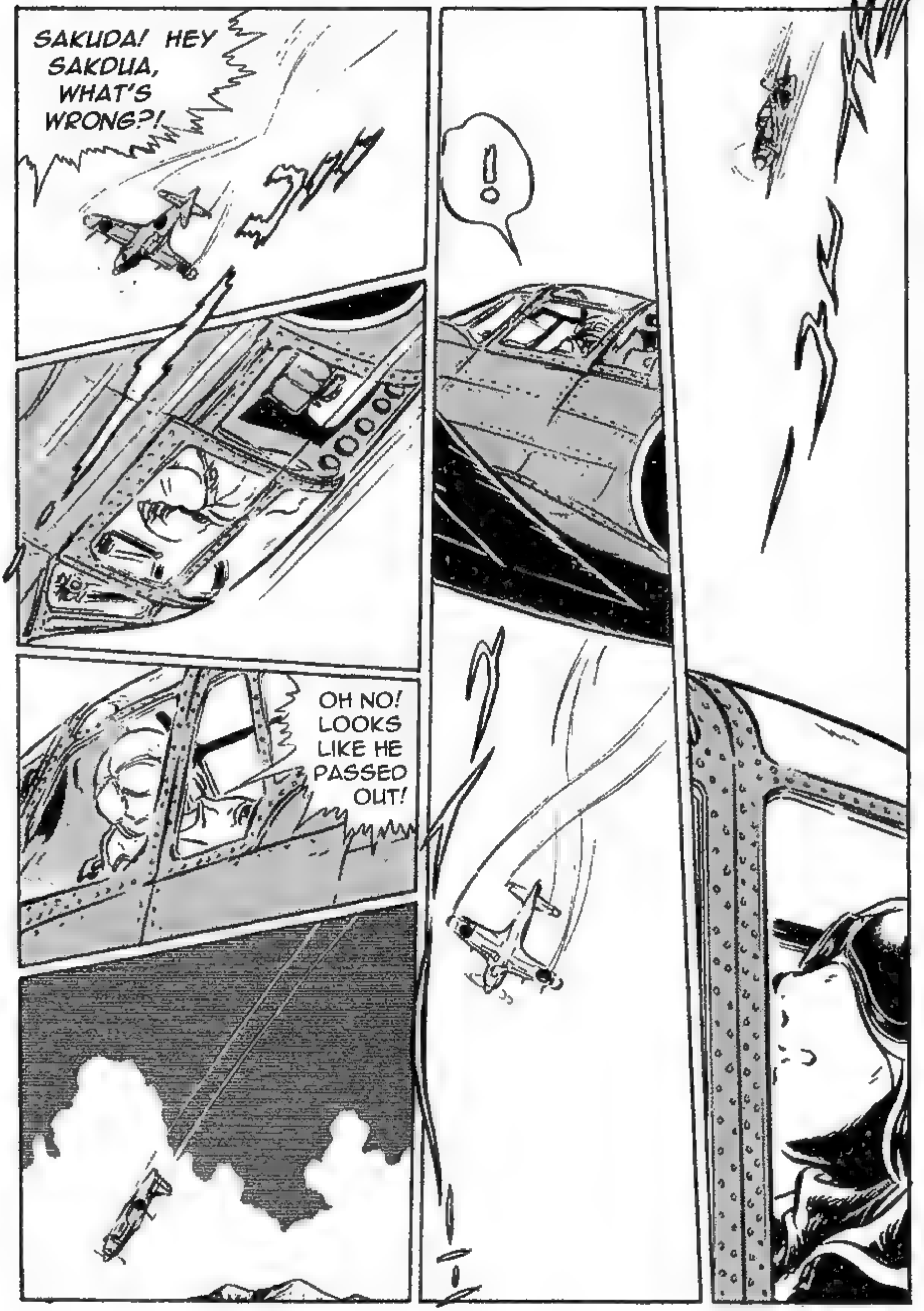
ME, I WANT TO EXPLORE. I MEAN, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THE REST OF THE WORLD IS LIKE UNTIL YOU GET OUT IN IT.

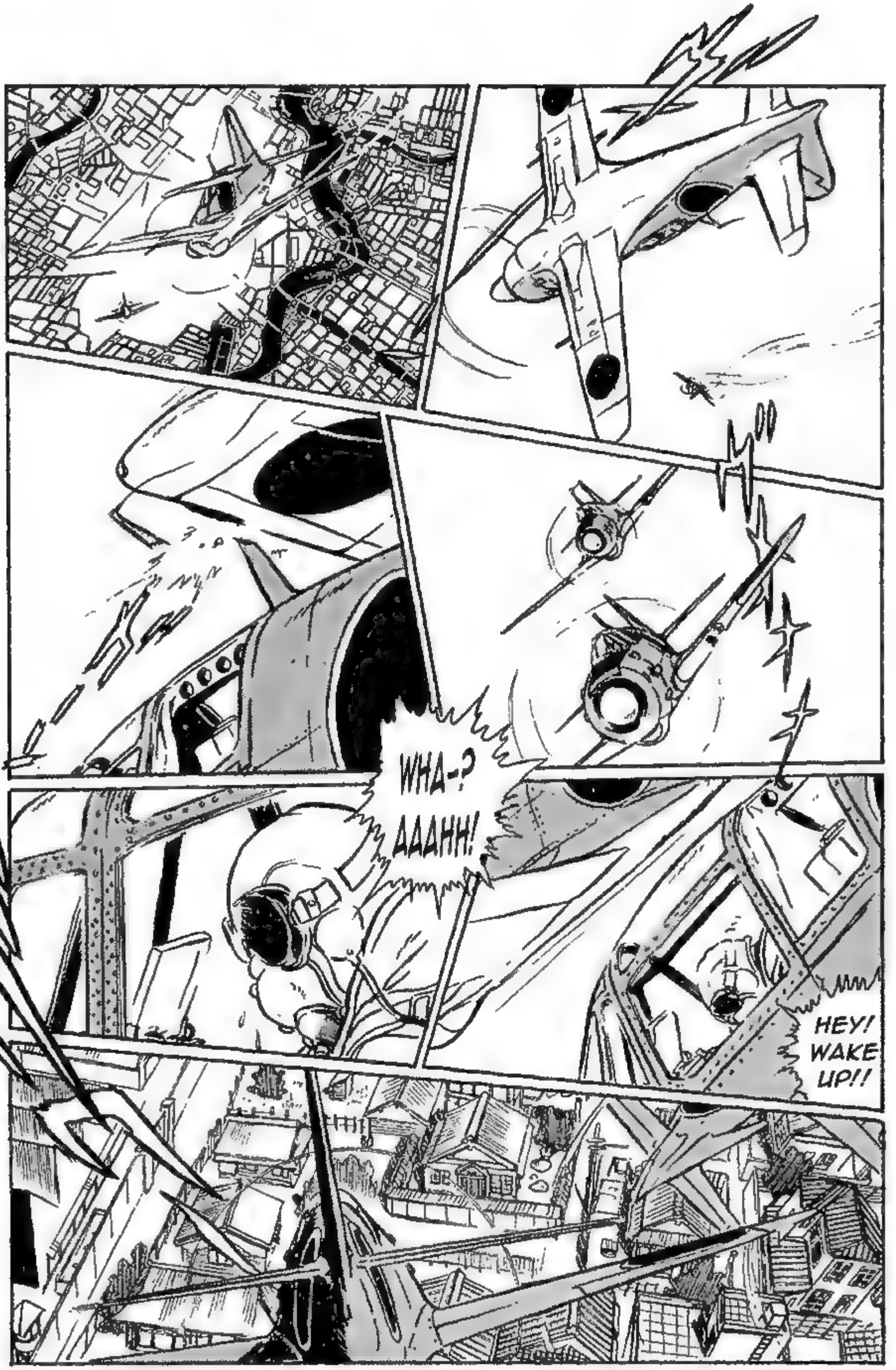
MANEUVERING BELOW 10,000 METERS

YAAHH!!!

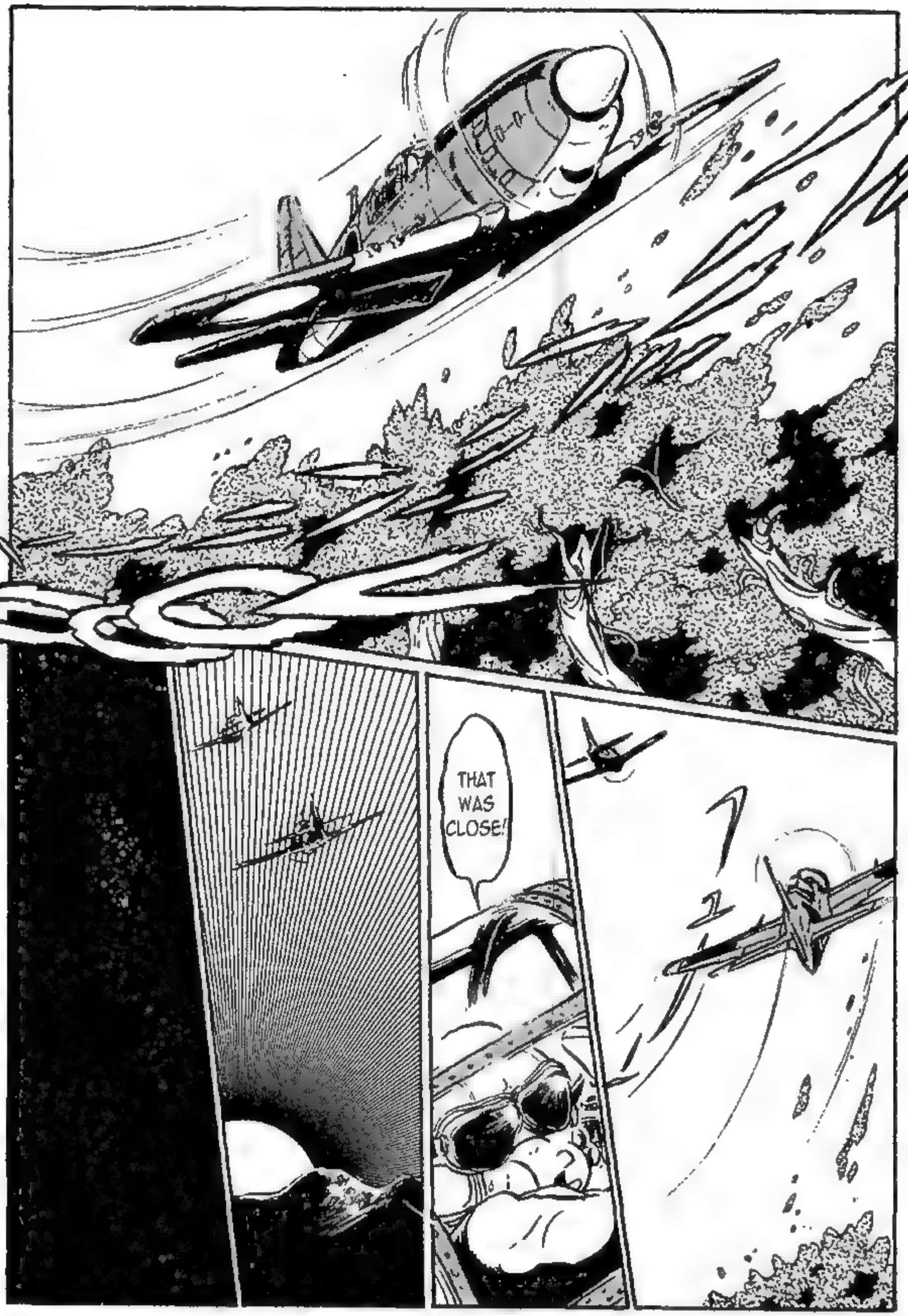
ZOOM

THIS IS OHARA! WE GOT THE LONE B-29 FLYING OVER THE KARMON STRAIT! WE DON'T SEE ANY OTHERS, OVER!
UNDERSTOOD! GOOD WORK! THE BOTH OF YOU CAN COME ON BACK!


SAKUDA! HEY SAKDUA, WHAT'S WRONG?!
!
OH NO! LOOKS LIKE HE PASSED OUT!

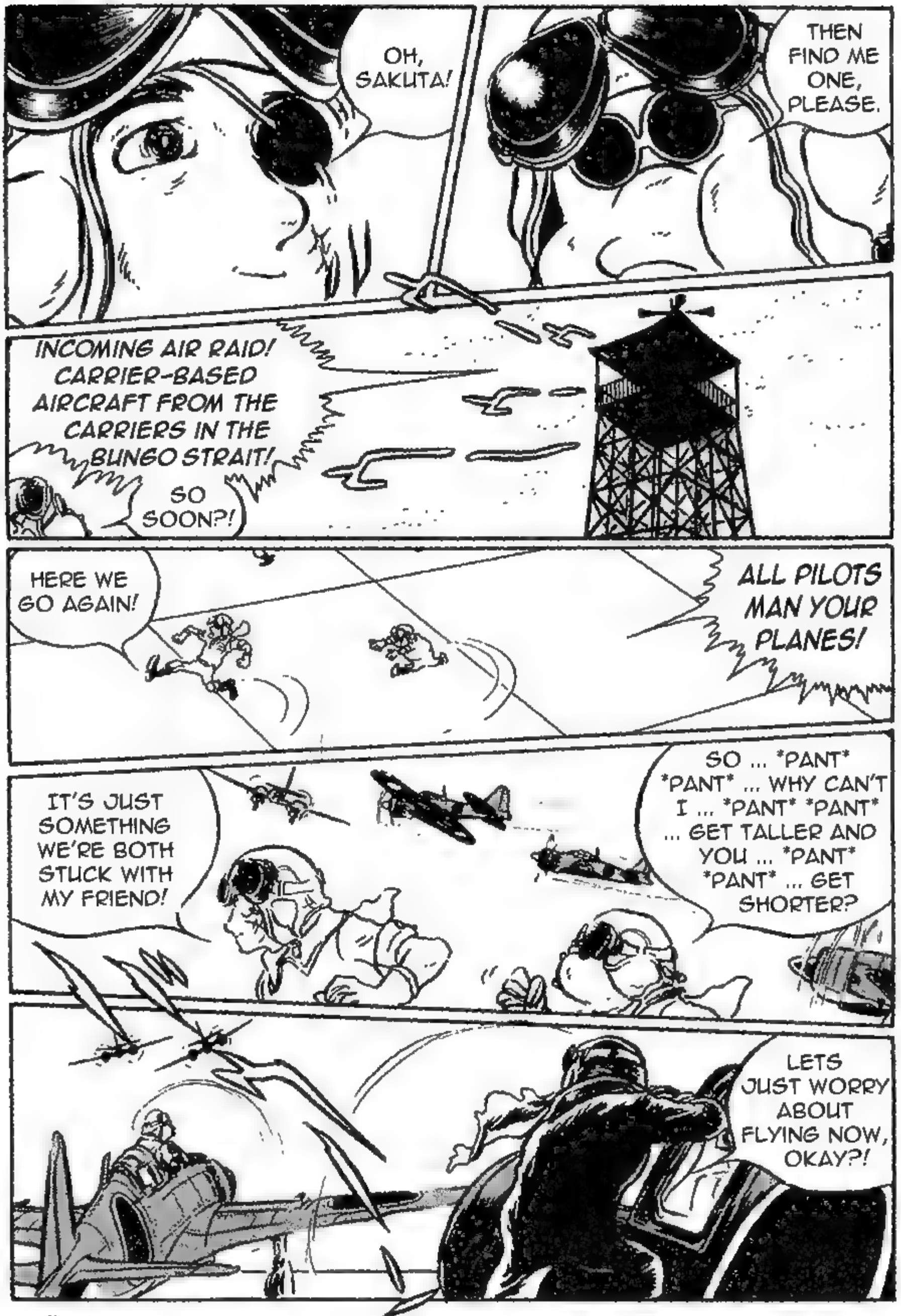

WHA-?
AAAHH!
HEY! WAKE UP!!

MANEUVERING BELOW 10,000 METERS



ACTUALLY I RAN OUT OF OXYGEN, OHARA! I WAS TRYING TO DO MY BEST, BUT YOU KNOW! ANYWAY THANKS FOR TAPPING MY PLANE AND WAKING ME UP!
BETTER GET YOUR O2 REGULATOR CHECKED, SAKUTA! YOU ALMOST NOSE DIVED INTO THE GROUND!
... I MIGHT NOT BE THERE TO HELP YOU NEXT TIME AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO BECOME A GREASY GROUND SPOT!
MAYBE YOU SHOULD GET A SPARE TANK PUT IN, SAKUTA! YOU KNOW ...
NO! MUST BE THAT LACK OF OXYGEN! YOU'RE SEEING THINGS!
EXCUSE ME, BUT ARE YOU GETTING TALLER?
OH, HERE WE GO AGAIN. THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH BEING SHORT.
THEN I MUST BE GETTING SHORTER.
DID YOU KNOW THAT SOME GIRLS ACTUALLY DIG SHORT GUYS?

MANEUVERING BELOW 10,000 METERS



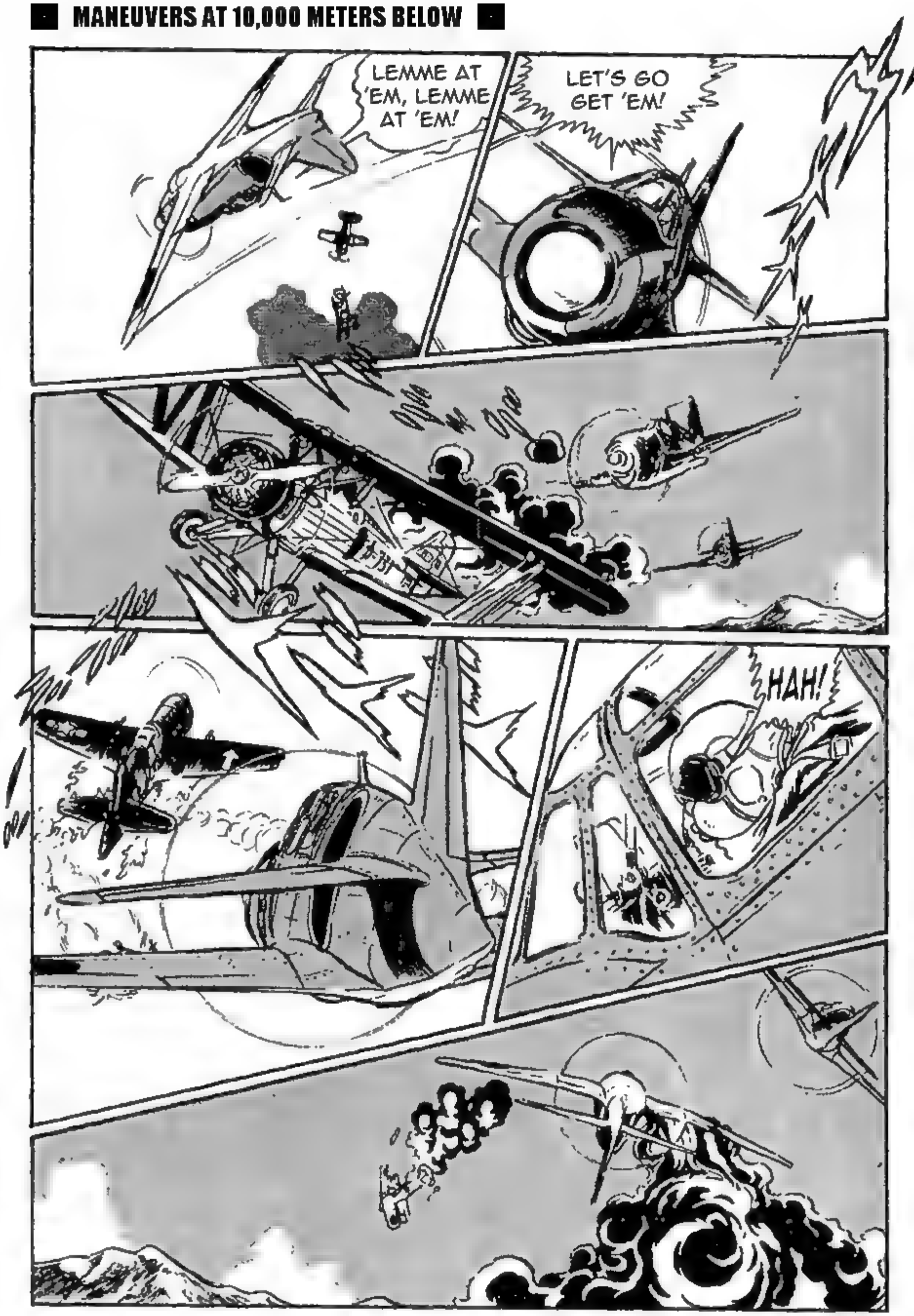
MMH?

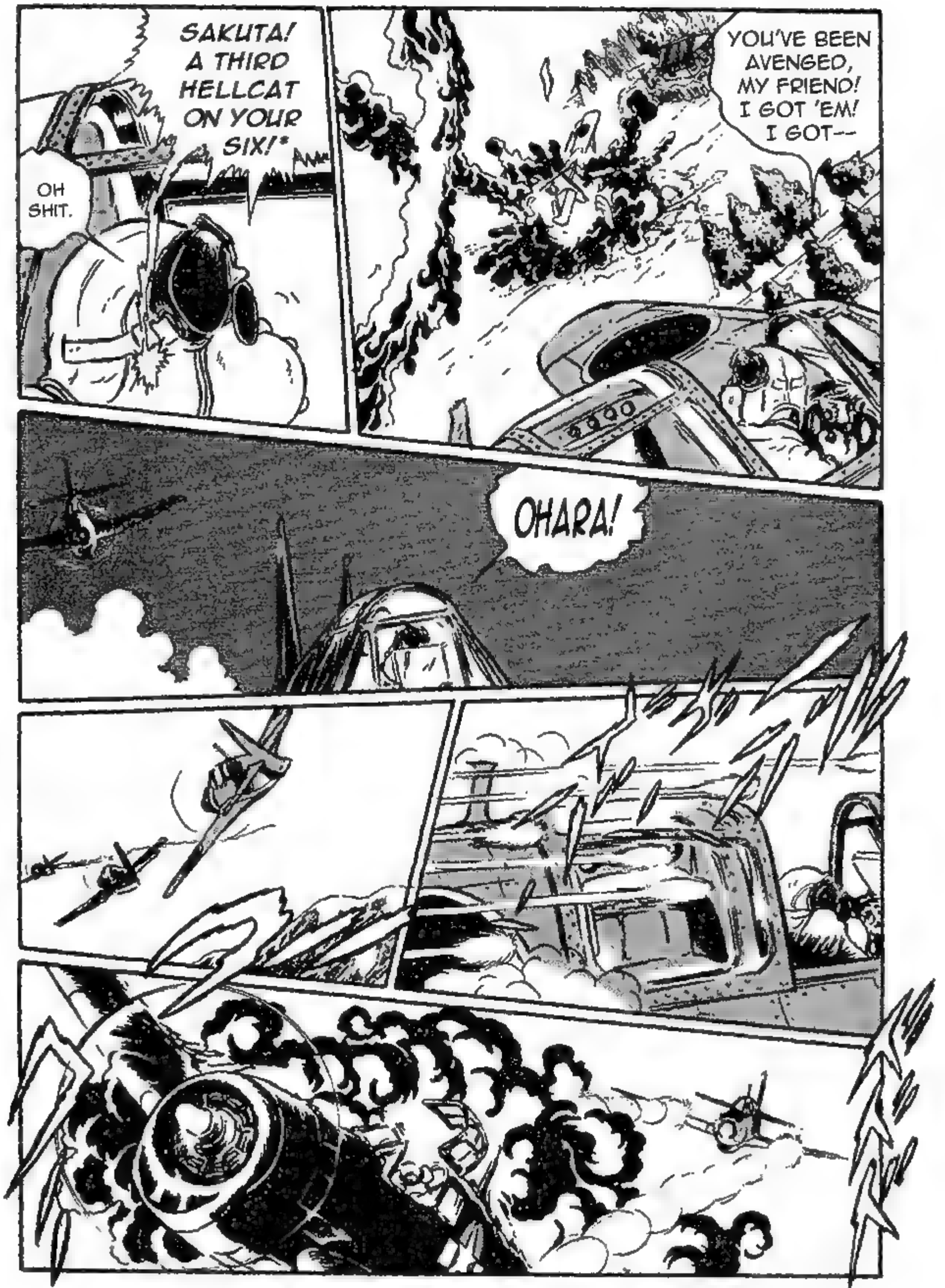
HMMM! NOT AS BIG A DEAL AS THE TOWER MADE IT OUT TO BE! LOOK OVER THERE, SAKUTA!

AH!

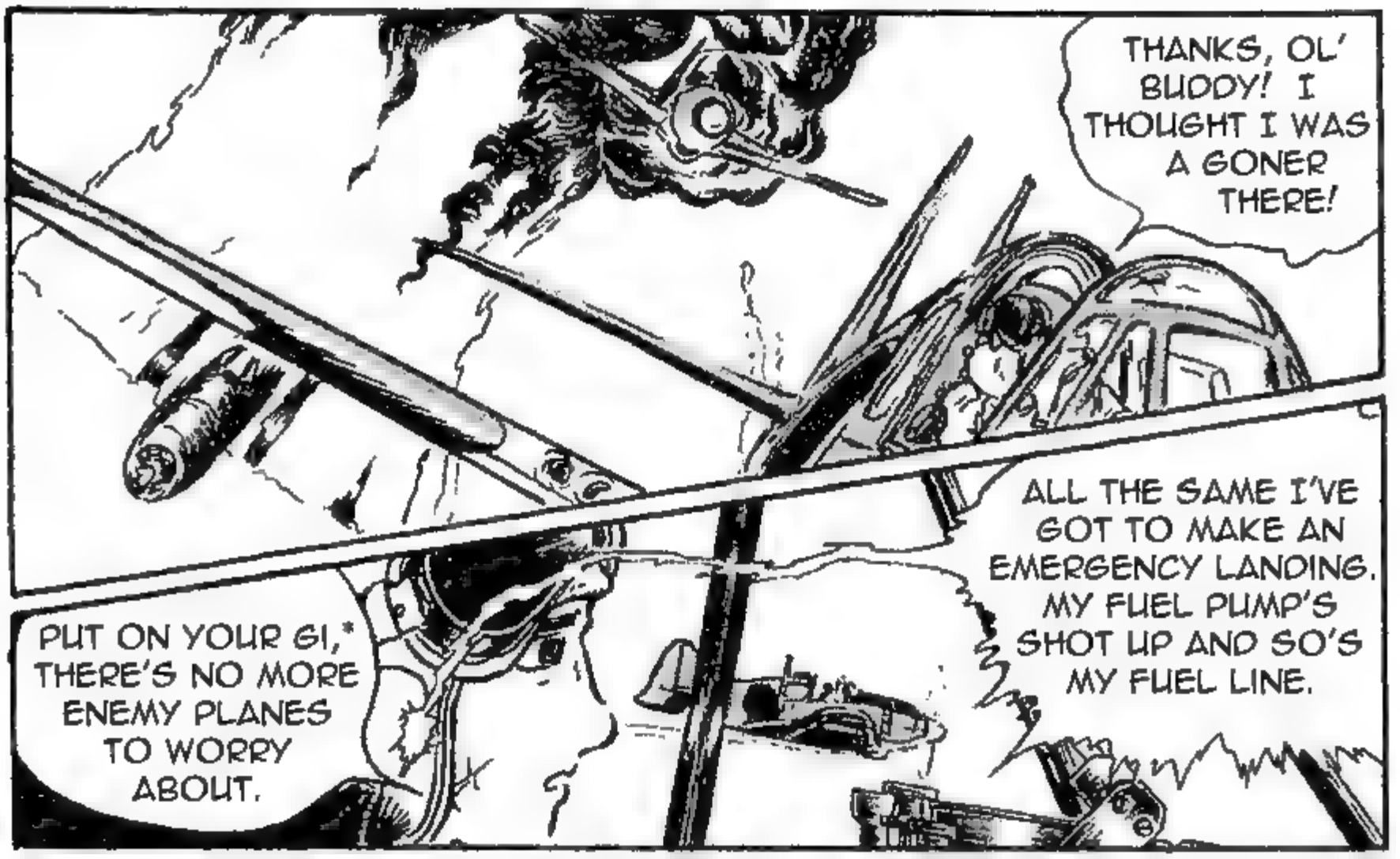
WHY, IT'S JUST TWO HELLCATS DOUBLE-TEAMING AN OBSERVER PLANE!

MANEUVERS AT 10,000 METERS BELOW

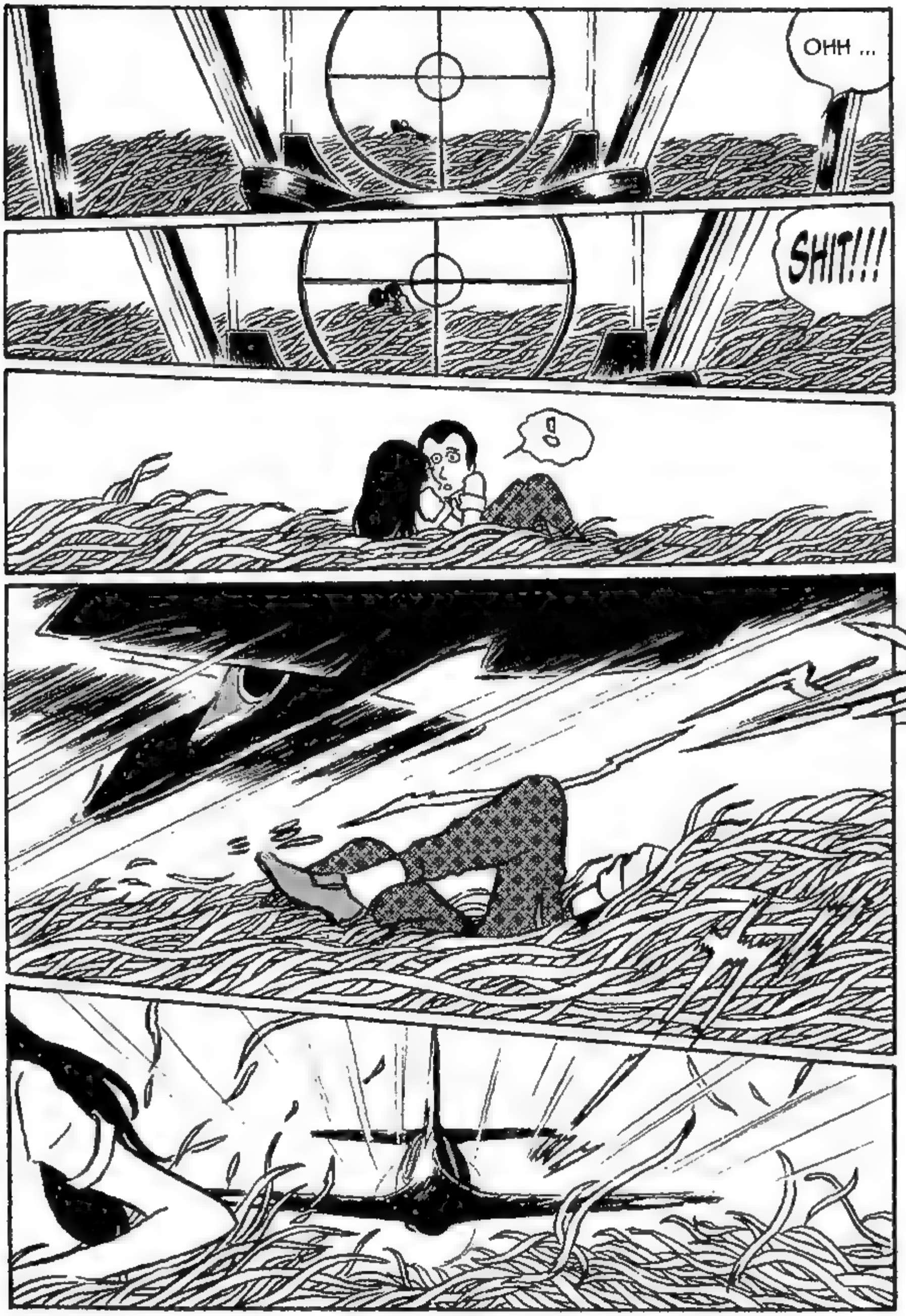




(*) "ON YOUR SIX" - DIRECTLY BEHIND AN ENEMY, AND THE BEST PLACE FROM WHICH TO SHOOT THEM DOWN.



(*) "PUT ON YOUR GI" – A *GI* IS A MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORM. THIS SAYING IS ANALAGOUS TO THE WESTERN "SETTLE DOWN" OR "JUST STAY COOL" OR MORE HUMOROUSLY "DON'T GET YOUR SHORTS IN A BUNCH."


OHH ...
SHIT!!!
!

BBRRRAAANNNN!!!

WHAM!!!

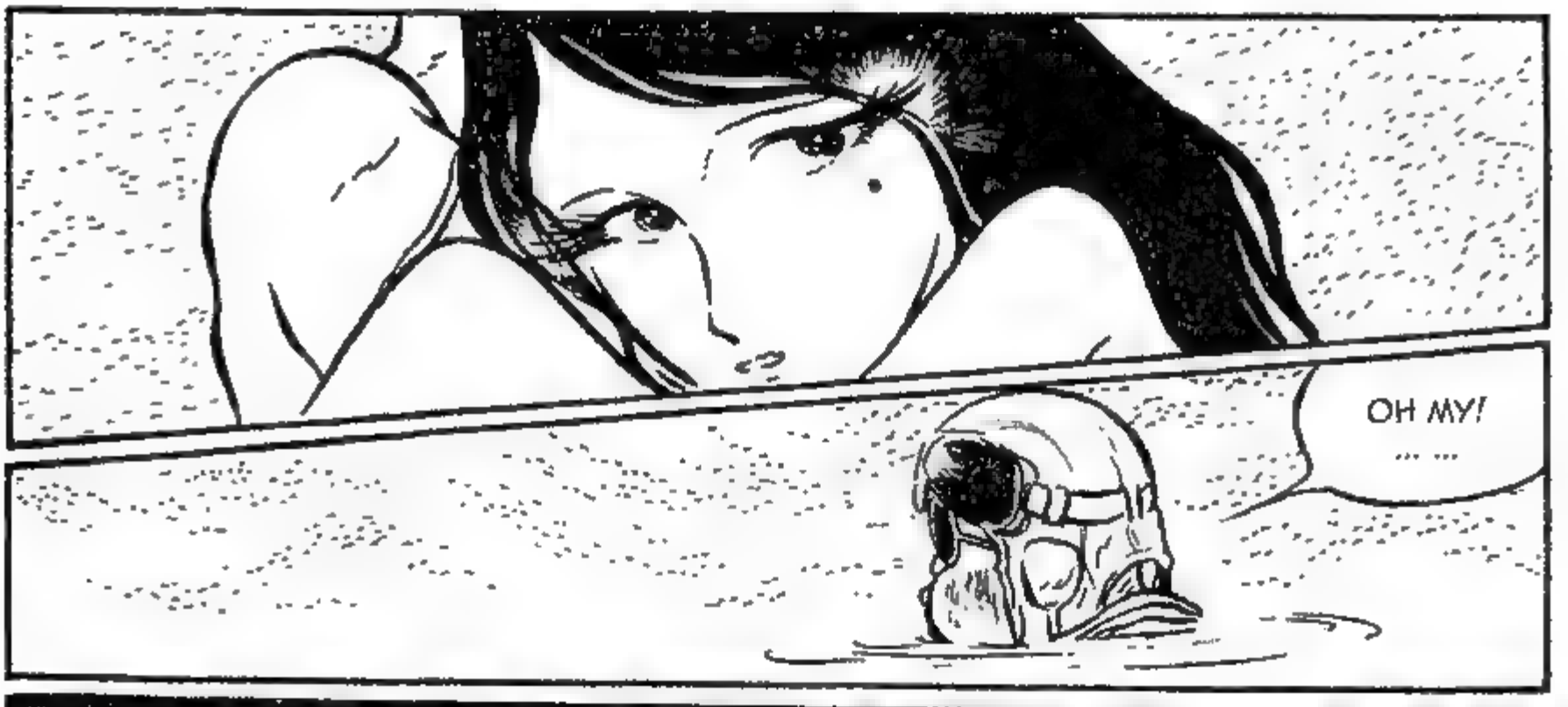
THUNK

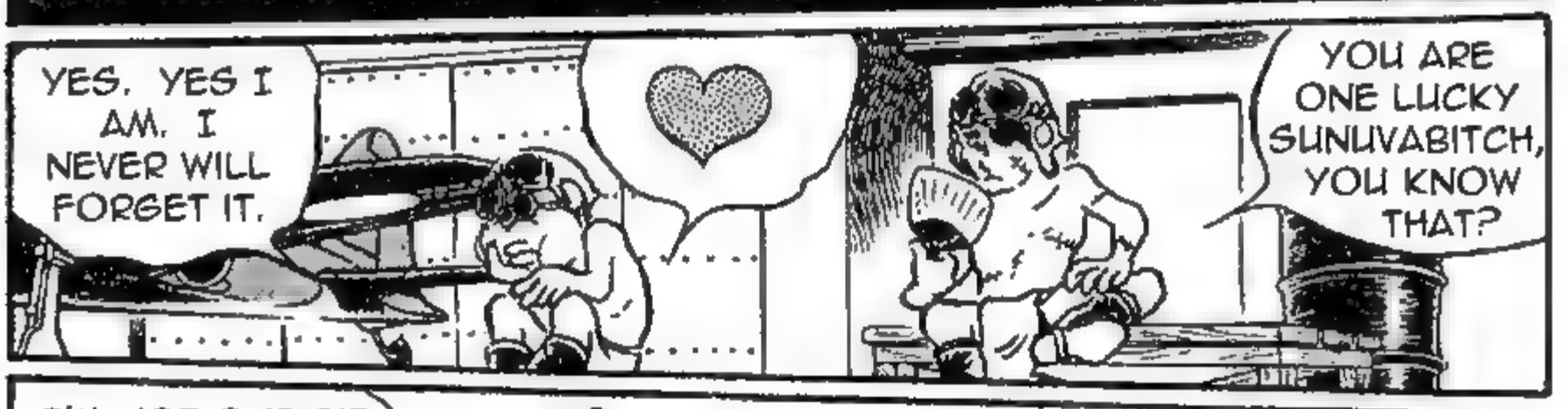
... UHH ...

HE ... HE ... IT ...

... DID ... DID I MISS 'EM? ... OOHHH ... WHAT WERE THEY DOING ... NEVER MIND ....

... I ... I WISH IT HAD HIT US.


OH MY!
... ...


YES. YES I AM. I NEVER WILL FORGET IT.
YOU ARE ONE LUCKY SUNUVABITCH, YOU KNOW THAT?

I'M NOT ONE BIT SURPRISED, CONSIDERING HOW BAD YOU SCARED THE BOTH OF THEM.
EVEN THOUGH SHE WAS STILL HOLDING HIM IN HER FRIGHT, HER LOOK WAS AT ME!

WELL, LOVE AND WAR DO KIND OF GO HAND IN HAND. IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THAT WAY, YOU KNOW.
I HAVE TO ADMIT I'M JEALOUS. HERE THE TWO OF US ARE UP IN THE SKY DEFENDING OUR HOMELAND, AND THOSE TWO ARE DOWN HERE DOING THAT!

YEAH, I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT. STILL, I CAN'T GET THE IMAGE OF HER OUT OF MY HEAD ...
ALL THAT POOR PILOT WANTED TO DO WAS SAY GOODBYE TO HIS GIRL.
THIS IS THE PILOT WHO SAVED YOU. MY OLDER SISTER ....
SIR, I THANK YOU FOR SAVING OUR LIVES EARLIER TODAY. WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL.
OH NO! I WAS JUST DOING MY DUTY! I MEAN, THANK YOU! THAT IS ....

OH! WELL, I, AH, UHMM ....

YOU SEE, I AM TO BE MARRIED, AND HAD YOU--

IT HAPPENS SOMETIMES, EVEN TODAY. SHE DIDN'T LOOK TOO HAPPY ABOUT IT, THOUGH.

DAMN. SHE WAS A NICE GIRL. I'D LIKED TO HAVE GOTTEN TO KNOW HER.

TO SAVE THEIR FAMILY LINE?

A WOMAN'S BODY HAS BEEN FOUND IN THE RIVER!!!

AND A PILOT HAS SHOT HIMSELF!

IF ONLY ... *SIGH*

HE GOT HIMSELF INTO A SITUATION HE COULDN'T GET OUT OF AND WAS KILLED. SHE WAS FORCED INTO A MARRIAGE SHE DIDN'T WANT AND KILLED HERSELF.

STILL, I WISH I HADN'T SEEN IT. REMINDS ME OF MY LATE YOUNGER BROTHER. I COULDN'T STOP HIM FROM DYING EITHER. I WARNED HIM BUT HE WOULDN'T LISTEN.

COINCIDENCE AND OVERLAP, SAKUTA. SOMETIMES IT CAN'T BE HELPED.

I WISH I HADN'T SEEN THAT OR GOTTEN INVOLVED. IT SUCKS.

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE FEEL SO BAD TO SEEK IT?

WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES DEATH SO ATTRACTIVE OVER LIVING?

LET IT GO, SAKUTA. REMEMBER, IT'S JUST COINCIDENCE AND OVERLAP. THAT'S ALL. REALLY!

WHY DO I FEEL SO BAD? WHY AM I EVEN ASKING THESE THINGS?

LET'S TAKE IT OUT. SEND UP ALL OUR SQUADRONS IN THE USUAL TAKEOFF PATTERN, ONE RIGHT AFTER THE OTHER!

WHAT WE'VE GOT LOOKS LIKE A LARGE FORMATION OF B-29S HEADING NORTH, MOST LIKELY TARGET KITAKYUSHU. ALTITUDE 10,000 METERS, APPARENTLY NO FIGHTER ESCORT AT ALL!

THEY'RE AT THE UPPER LIMIT OF OUR PLANES. OH HOW I WISH OUR NEW ONES WERE READY!

ONES WERE

ALL AIRCRAFT WILL TAKE OFF IN SQUADRON ORDER!!!

THAT'S JUST IT, SIR! WE DON'T HAVE ANY MORE SPARE OXYGEN CYLINDERS FOR THE PLANES! YOU'VE ONLY GOT THE ONE SO YOU'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL WITH IT!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "NO SPARE?"

MANEUVERS AT 10,000 METERS BELOW

BUT WHAT WILL YOU DO SINCE MINE DOESN'T HAVE ONE?

HEY, SAKUTA! TAKE MY PLANE. IT'S GOT A SPARE OXYGEN CYLINDER.

THERE'S A CERTAIN IRONY IN THAT, YOU KNOW.

APPARENTLY THEY CAN'T MAKE ANY MORE DUE TO AMERICAN BOMBING.

DON'T FORGET, I COME FROM A LONG LINE OF PEARL DIVERS. WE'RE USED TO HOLDING OUR BREATH FOR FAR LONGER THAN MOST PEOPLE CAN DO. I'LL JUST BREATH SLOW AND SAVE MY OXYGEN. YOU'LL SEE!

I'LL MANAGE. I DARESAY I CAN MANAGE BETTER THAN YOU WOULD.

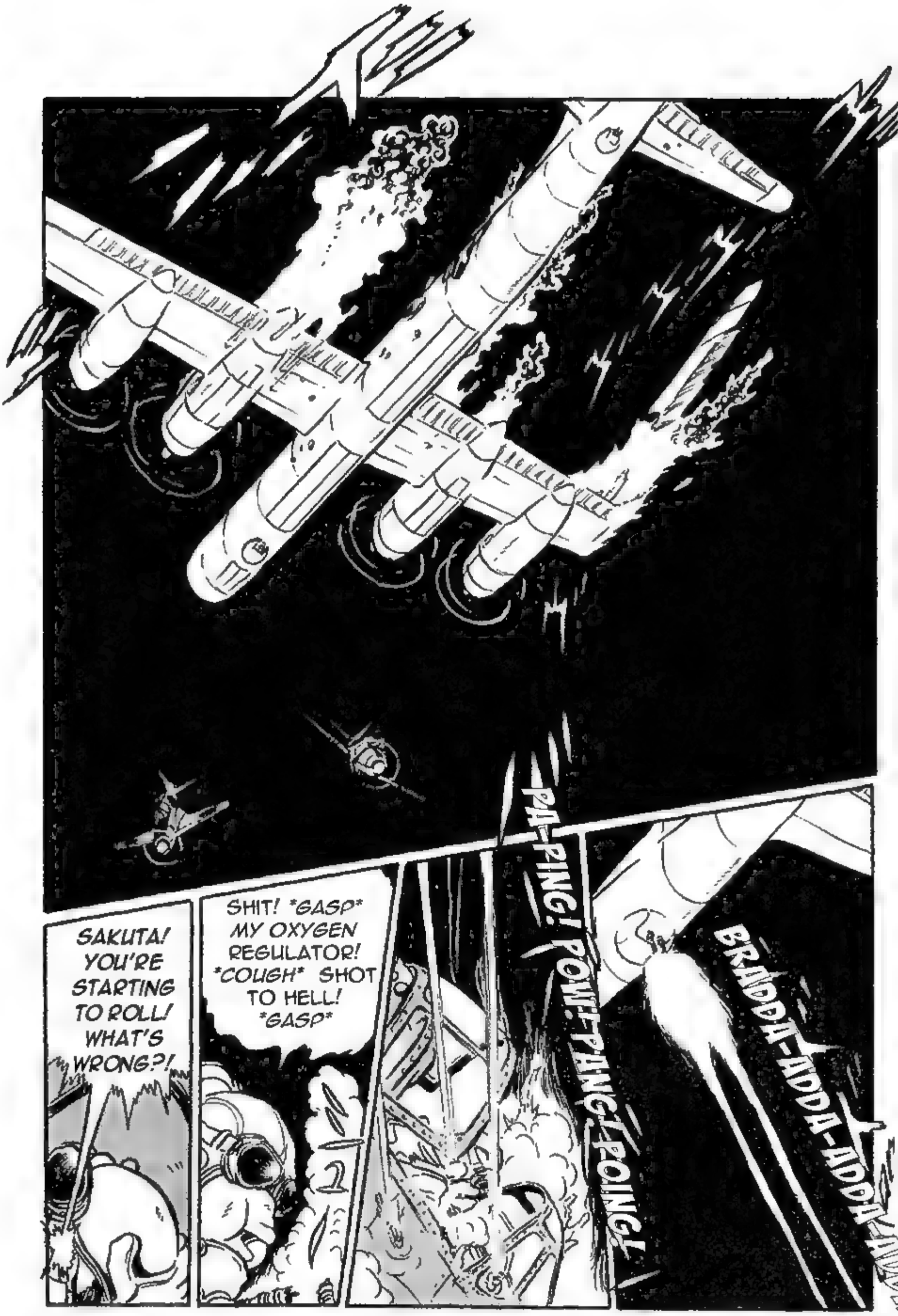
THANKS.

AS LONG AS WE STAY BELOW 10,000 METERS I'LL BE FINE! IT'S NO BIG DEAL! REALLY!

RIGHT!

JUST DON'T FORGET TO USE YOURS, OKAY? YOU TEND TO GET LIGHTHEADED AT HIGH ALTITUDE. YOU'VE GOT EXTRA OXYGEN SO DON'T BE AFRAID TO USE IT! IT'S GOING TO GET CRAZY UP THERE!

SAKUTA! LET ME GO FIRST AND YOU HANG BEHIND!
WE'RE LATE! LET'S GO JOIN THE PARTY!
WOW! THEY STARTED WITHOUT US!
REMEMBER, I CAN DO BETTER UP HERE EVEN WITHOUT A SPARE CYLINDER THAN YOU!
LET'S DO IT!
B-29S TO OUR RIGHT, OHARA!
DON'T MENTION IT! I GOTTA START PEARL DIVER BREATHING, SO TAKE CARE!
THANKS AGAIN, OHARA!


BRADDA-ADDA-ADDA-ADDA-
PA-PING! POW! PANG! POING!
SHIT! *GASP* MY OXYGEN REGULATOR! *COUGH* SHOT TO HELL! *GASP*
SAKUTA! YOU'RE STARTING TO ROLL! WHAT'S WRONG?!

I'M COMING! HANG IN THERE!

NOW LISTEN TO ME! BREATHE SLOWLY AND FROM YOUR STOMACH, NOT YOUR CHEST!

TOO LATE! *GASP* PLANE SHOT UP TOO! *COUGH* I COULDN'T ... PUT ON MY GI ... IF I TRIED!

I'LL ... *COUGH* I'LL BE SURE ... *GASP* ... TO SAY "HI" ... FOR YOU ... *ACK*

IF ... IF I SEE HER ... WHEN I GET THERE ...

I'VE ... I'VE LOST CONTROL ... GOING INTO ... A DIVE ...

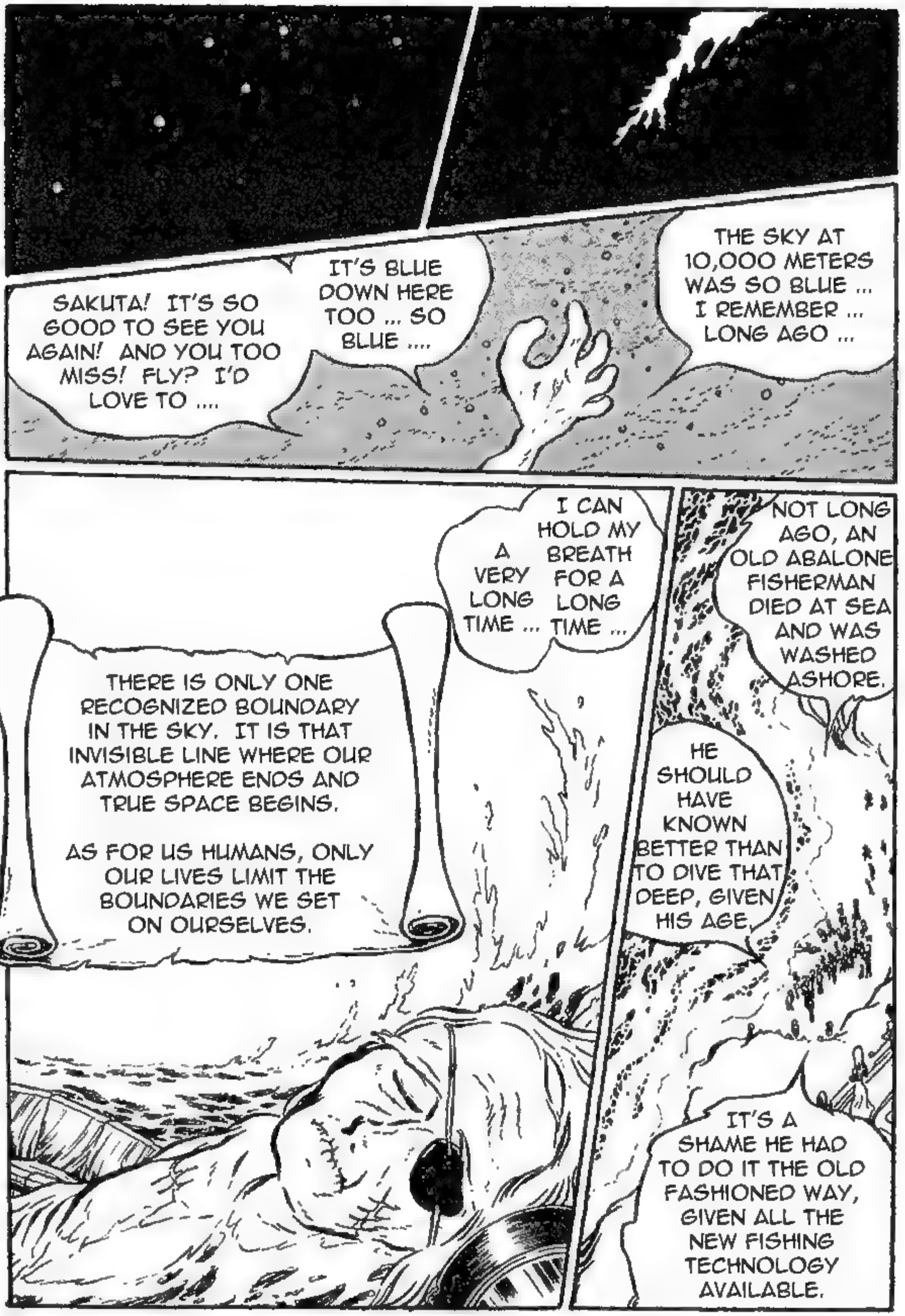
BLAM!!!

GOODBYE ... OHARA ... MY TRUE FRIEND ...

... I'LL MISS YOU ...

... I REALLY WILL ...

SAKUTA! YOU'RE ON FIRE!! BAIL OUT!!!



(Published in Big Comic Original, October 20, 1975 issue)

MANEUVERS AT 10,000 METERS BELOW

MANDELISMS

I don't have too much to say about this one As usual Google Translate AI let me down where I needed it the most, in particular the opening monologue and almost everything regarding the girl who kills herself over halfway throught the story ("Wha--?!" you say), so as usual I had to interpolate and invent far more than I would have liked Also and as usual I offer my sincere apologies to English speaking Matsumoto fans everywhere Perhaps someday you'll get a better and more accurate English adaptation. At least I tried. :P

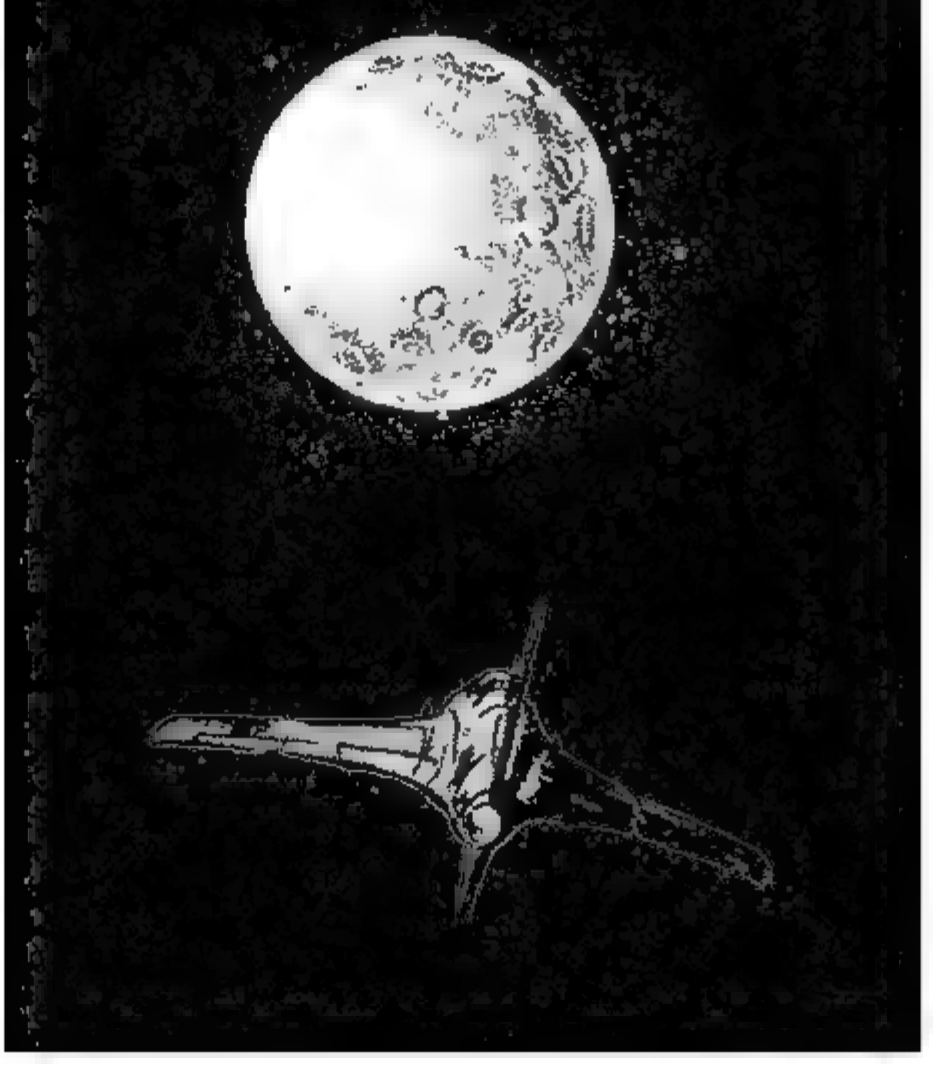
This is a very depressing and downbeat story in which, to quote the old dramatic maxim, "everyone dies." It's a combination of three different types of tragedy rolled into one short tale. There's the historical tragedy of the Nakajima Ki-44 Shoki's uneven fight against American B-29 bombing raids, one that Matsumoto has already visited and to greater effect in Volume 1's "High Altitude Fighter." There's the romantic tragedy in which one of this tale's main characters unexpectedly finds himself, one that was supposed to end honorably in a forced marriage but instead ends in suicide as I mentioned earlier. There's also the dramatic tragedy of the deaths of BOTH of the main characters -- one within the story itself, and the other at its end when Matsumoto reveals that the entire tale he's been weaving are in fact the last living memories of the aged version of the second main character before he too dies Common to both deaths are two things: a vision of infinite blue (the upper stratosphere in Lt. Sakuta's case, the blue depths of the ocean in the former Lt. Ohara's case), and lack of oxygen being the cause of death of both men As for the rest, well, talk among yourselves

Needless to say this is not one my personal favorite tales in *The Cockpit*. I personally think it's too complicated for its own good, but that's just me. I also think that if *The Cockpit* ever gets the audiovisual series treatment it rightly deserves and in whatever form that takes, this story could be left out and no one would miss it Then again, and as I said before, that's just me

Oh, I did slightly alter Ohara's final lines, provided Google Translate AI got them right (eyes roll), so I could incorporate one of my favorite quotes from the movie *Creepshow* It seemed appropriate given how he died in the end

TALES FROM THE COCKPIT

FIREFLIES ON THE ELBE



OBSERVATION POST 67 HAS SPOTTED A LONE BRITISH RECON PLANE ...

... HEADING TOWARDS US FROM ACROSS THE DF LINE. SEND AN INTERCEPT!

OKAY, HOW FAST?

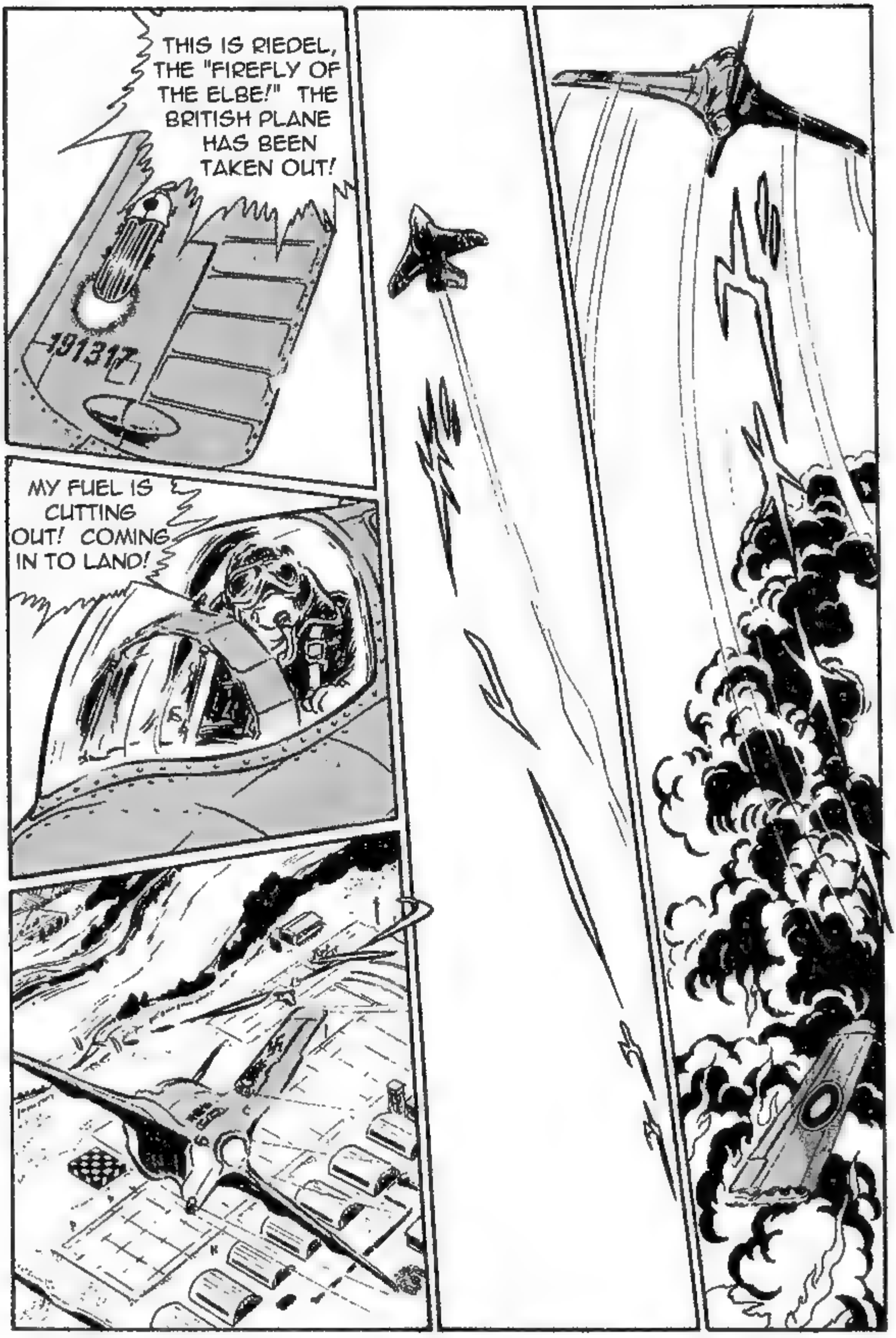
SOMETHING'S BEHIND US AND COMING UP FAST!

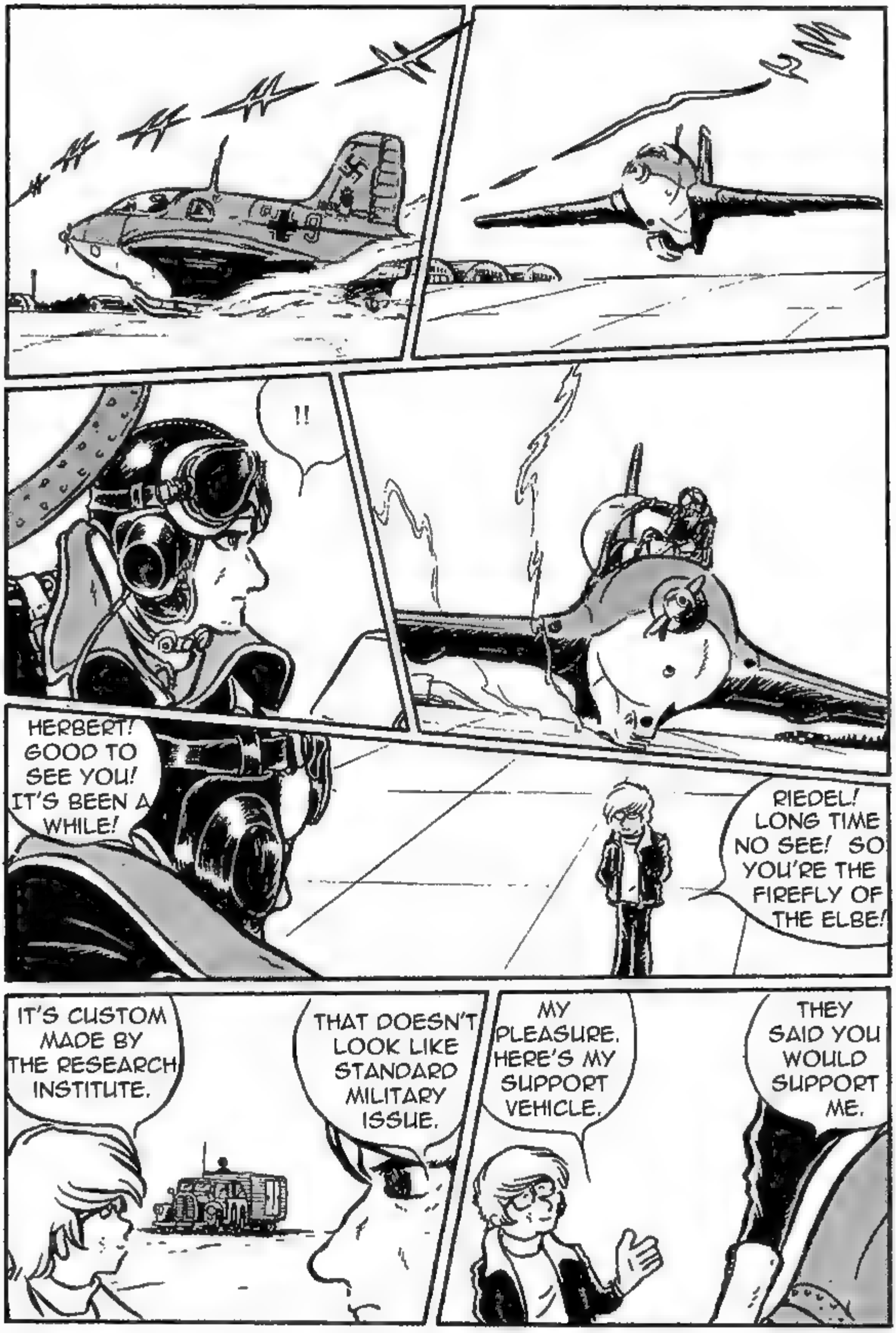
I'M TELLING YA ...

WHY DO YOU KEEP LOOKING BACK? DON'T WORRY! THIS IS A MOSQUITO! IT'S GOT A GOOD TRACK RECORD--

LIKE A HAWK DIVING ON ITS PREY!

FIREFLIES ON THE ELBE


THIS IS RIEDEL, THE "FIREFLY OF THE ELBE!" THE BRITISH PLANE HAS BEEN TAKEN OUT!
191317
MY FUEL IS CUTTING OUT! COMING IN TO LAND!


!!
HERBERT! GOOD TO SEE YOU! IT'S BEEN A WHILE!
RIEDEL! LONG TIME NO SEE! SO YOU'RE THE FIREFLY OF THE ELBE!
IT'S CUSTOM MADE BY THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE.
THAT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE STANDARD MILITARY ISSUE.
MY PLEASURE. HERE'S MY SUPPORT VEHICLE.
THEY SAID YOU WOULD SUPPORT ME.

AND IN COMBAT?

I JUST WISH IT HAD MORE POWERED COMBAT TIME.

A NEAT PLANE.

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE KOMET?

PROBABLY NOT EVEN IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM.

AS LONG AS I HAVE FUEL AND THE ENGINE CONTINUES TO WORK, THERE'S NOTHING MAN-MADE FASTER IN THE AIR.

I BELIEVE THAT THERE'S OTHER KINDS OF LIFE OUT THERE, AND WITH ROCKETS WE MIGHT MEET ONE DAY.

I'M A SCIENTIST, NOT A QUACK, RIEDEL.

STILL DREAMING THE OLD DREAM, I SEE. HAS THE VRIL SOCIETY* DRAFTED YOU YET, HERBERT?

THAT'S ... QUITE A DREAM.

MY DREAM IS FOR MAN TO GO TO THE MOON AND EVEN BEYOND!

YOUR DREAM IS TO FIGHT FOR AND DIE FOR GERMANY, RIGHT?

(*) THE VRIL SOCIETY (DE. *VRIL GESELLSCHAFT*) WAS SUPPOSEDLY A SECRET SOCIETY THAT EXISTED BEFORE THE NAZIS AND HELPED THEM COVERTLY IN THEIR RISE TO POWER. BELIEF IN EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE WAS BUT ONE OF THE MANY THINGS THEY WERE INTO ...

PROVIDED I DON'T DIE IN THIS WAR FIRST AND CAN CONTINUE MY WORK.

AND YOU'D LIKE TO MEET THEM.

THANK YOU, RIEDEL. I'M HONORED.

YOU KNOW, I WON'T PRETEND TO BELIEVE IN FOO FIGHTERS* AND ALL THAT, BUT I DO RESPECT THAT BIG A DREAM.

AND OUT HERE I GET TO SEE FOR MYSELF HOW IT REALLY WORKS.

I'M A VOLUNTEER. I'M ONE OF THE PEOPLE WHO HELPED MAKE THE KOMET.

SO WHY ARE YOU HERE?

WE'RE WORKING ON THAT.

WELL, I CAN TELL YOU ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW IN A FEW WORDS. IT'S FANTASTIC BUT NEEDS MORE FLIGHT TIME.

OUR 1200163A ROCKET ENGINE IS VIRTUALLY FRESH OFF THE DRAWING BOARD! THERE'S BEEN NO TIME TO REFINE IT!

WE KNEW FLIGHT TIME WOULD BE A BIG PROBLEM.

THEY'RE FAR TOO VOLATILE AND REQUIRE SPECIAL HANDLING. AS MANY PILOTS HAVE DIED IN FUEL EXPLOSIONS AS IN COMBAT.

ON TOP OF THAT THE FUELS WE HAD TO USE ARE NOT IDEAL.

 (*) "FOO FIGHTER" – ONE OF THE MOST COMMON WWII ERA TERMS FOR A U.F.O. THE ACTUAL GERMAN TERM FOR THEM WAS *FEUERBALL*, I.E. "FIREBALL."

OF COURSE YOU KNOW THAT EVERY TIME YOU GO UP YOU'RE FLYING A MANMADE ETHANOL BOMB, WITH THAT HYDROGEN PEROXIDE AND HYDRAZINE MIXTURE YOU'RE USING AS FUEL. ONE LITTLE LEAK, EVEN A MIST ...

HE'LL HAVE TO DUMP HIS FUEL--

TOWER! MY FUEL RELEASE VALVE HAS JAMMED!

GLIDE IT BACK IN AS BEST YOU CAN! FIRE TEAM, GET READY!!

HIS ENGINE CUT OUT.

FIREFLIES ON THE ELBE

EVERYTHING FOR WHICH I AND EVERYONE ELSE BACK AT THE INSTITUTE WORKED FOR ALL THESE YEARS ...

IS BEING PERVERTED BY THE POWERS THAT BE FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING WAR, AND FOR KILLING OUR FELLOW MEN ....

MANNED ROCKETS SHOULD NOT BE USED FOR WAR ...

... BUT FOR GOING TO THE MOON, AND PERHAPS BEYOND.

DON'T GIVE UP HOPE, HERBERT. I MAY BE ONLY A WARRIOR ...

... BUT I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE AND THEN LIVE A DREAM. YOU'VE GOT A BIG DREAM. YOUR DAY WILL COME, SOMEDAY ....

YEAH. AFTER YOU AND I ARE BOTH DEAD AND LONG GONE, I FEAR.

THEN SO BE IT ... BUT IT'S STILL A GOOD DREAM.

HEH! THAT'S BEEN A WHILE.

REMEMBER THE LEGEND I GAVE IT? "HERE WE LEAVE OUR FOOTPRINTS ON THE MOON, GERMAN SPACE EXPLORERS WALTER VON RIEDEL AND HANS CHRISTIAN HERBERT."

I STILL HAVE IT.

REMEMBER THAT DRAWING I DID WHEN WE WERE BOTH IN GYMNASIUM?*

THE V-2 IS SUB-ORBITAL AND CAN REACH LONDON.

BUT WITH THE KOMET HAVING ONLY EIGHT MINUTES OF FLIGHT TIME ....

THAT WON'T LAST.

DR. VON BRAUN MADE IT CLEAR HE INTENDS THAT FOR EXPLORING SPACE--

AND WE'RE ALREADY PLANNING THE A-12,** THE AGGREGAT.

YEAH. HITLER'LL-- HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

TAKING A SWIM.

I'M FINE! DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!

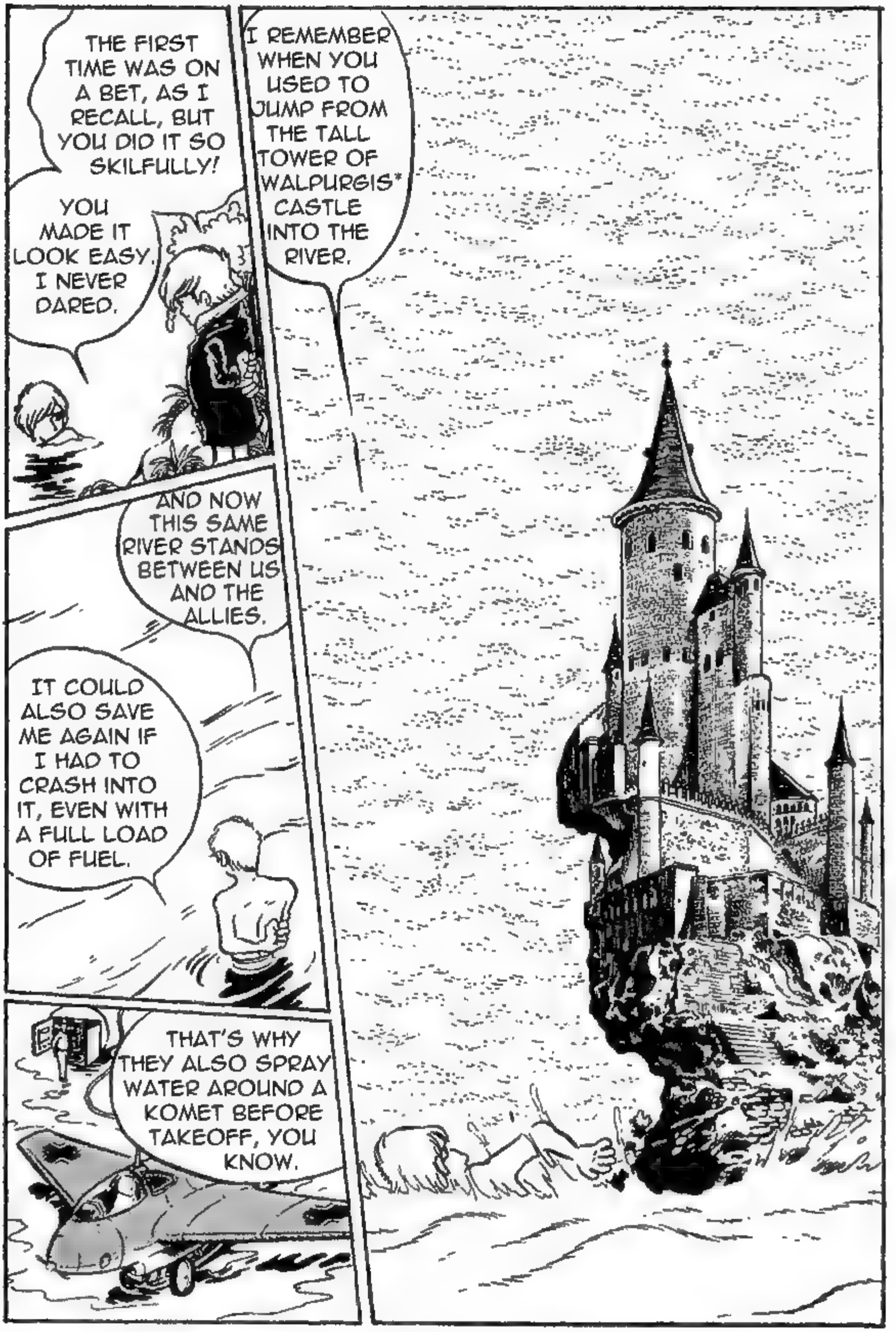
BUT THE ICE! THE FREEZING WATER!

ACHTUNG

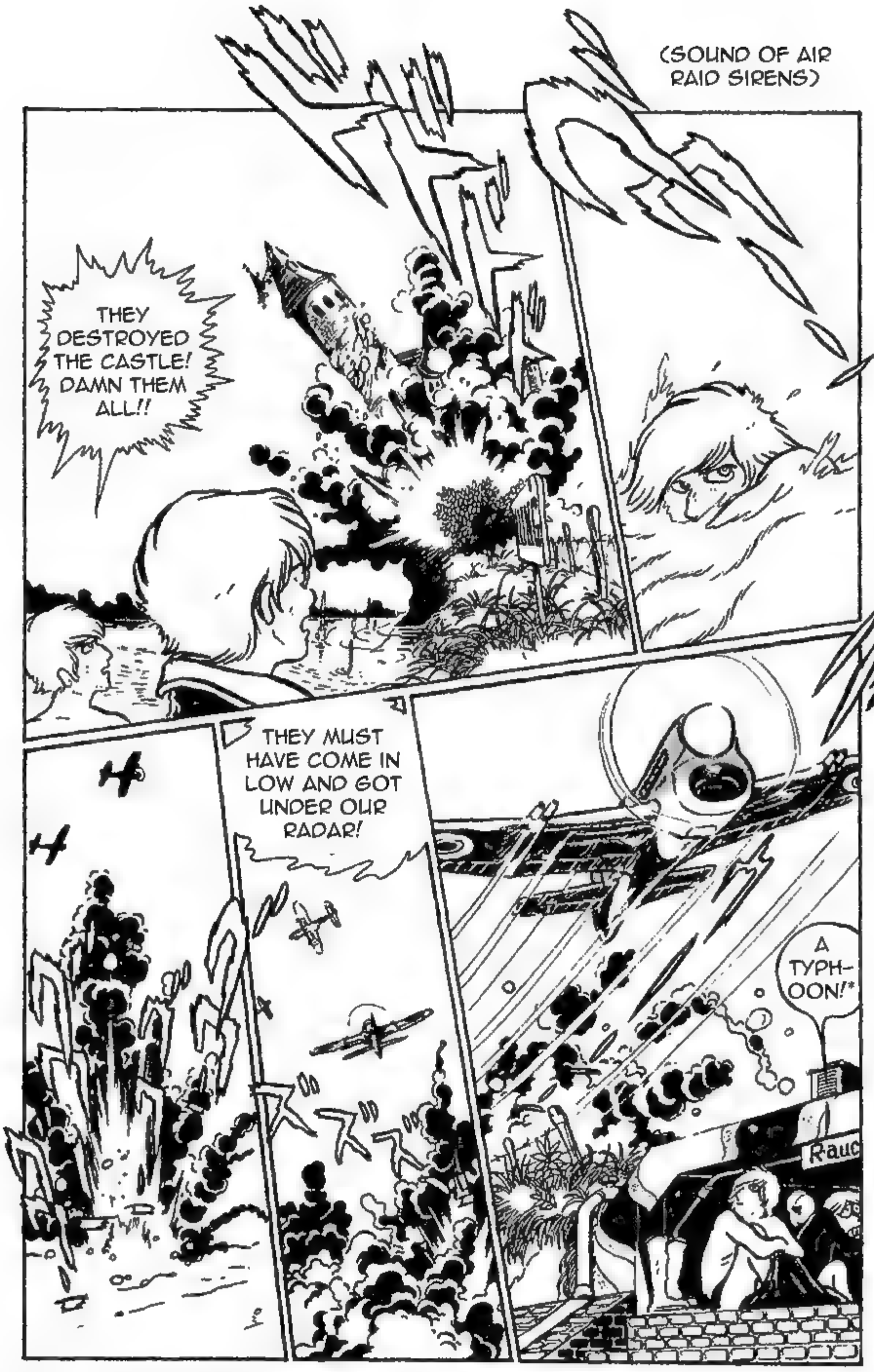
IT'S A MULTI-STAGE ROCKET SYSTEM THAT'LL PUT US UP IN ORBIT, AND GET US READY FOR THE BIG LEAP INTO SPACE.

(*) *GYMNASIUM* (GIM-NAH-ZE-UHM) - THE GERMAN TERM FOR HIGH SCHOOL. I LEARNED THAT FROM *HOGAN'S HEROES*, BELIEVE IT OR NOT! (R.M.)

(**) MATSUMOTO CALLS THIS THE "V-12" IN HIS ORIGINAL TEXT, WHICH WAS A COMMON ERROR MADE AT THE TIME BY MANY PEOPLE GIVEN THE LIMITED INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON AGGREGAT BACK IN THE 1970S.



(*) THERE NEVER WAS A *SCHLOSS* (CASTLE) *WALPURGIS* IN GERMANY IN REAL LIFE, OF COURSE; HOWEVER AND PER MATSUMOTO'S ABOVE ILLUSTRATION HIS FICTIONAL CASTLE MAY HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY THE REAL LIFE SCHLOSS LICHTENSTEIN IN BADEN-WÜRTTENBURG.



145 (*) "A TYPHOON!" – THE BRITISH HAWKER TYPHOON, WHICH IN ITS LATE WAR INCARNATION (THE "BOMBPHOON") WAS ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SINGLE ENGINE GROUND ATTACK AIRCRAFT OF THE WAR.

LOOKS LIKE WE'RE THEIR PRIMARY TARGET.

TOO BAD FOR THEM THEY'RE UNDERGROUND AND REINFORCED. A 1-TON BOMB WOULDN'T WORK

THEY TRIED FOR THE FUEL BUNKERS.

OH MY GOD ... ! THE TOWN ... THE WHOLE TOWN! WHY?! THEY DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG!

NO!

THE BASE WASN'T THEIR ONLY TARGET.

LET'S GO!

TELL THAT TO THAT SCHWINEHUND "BOMBER HARRIS."

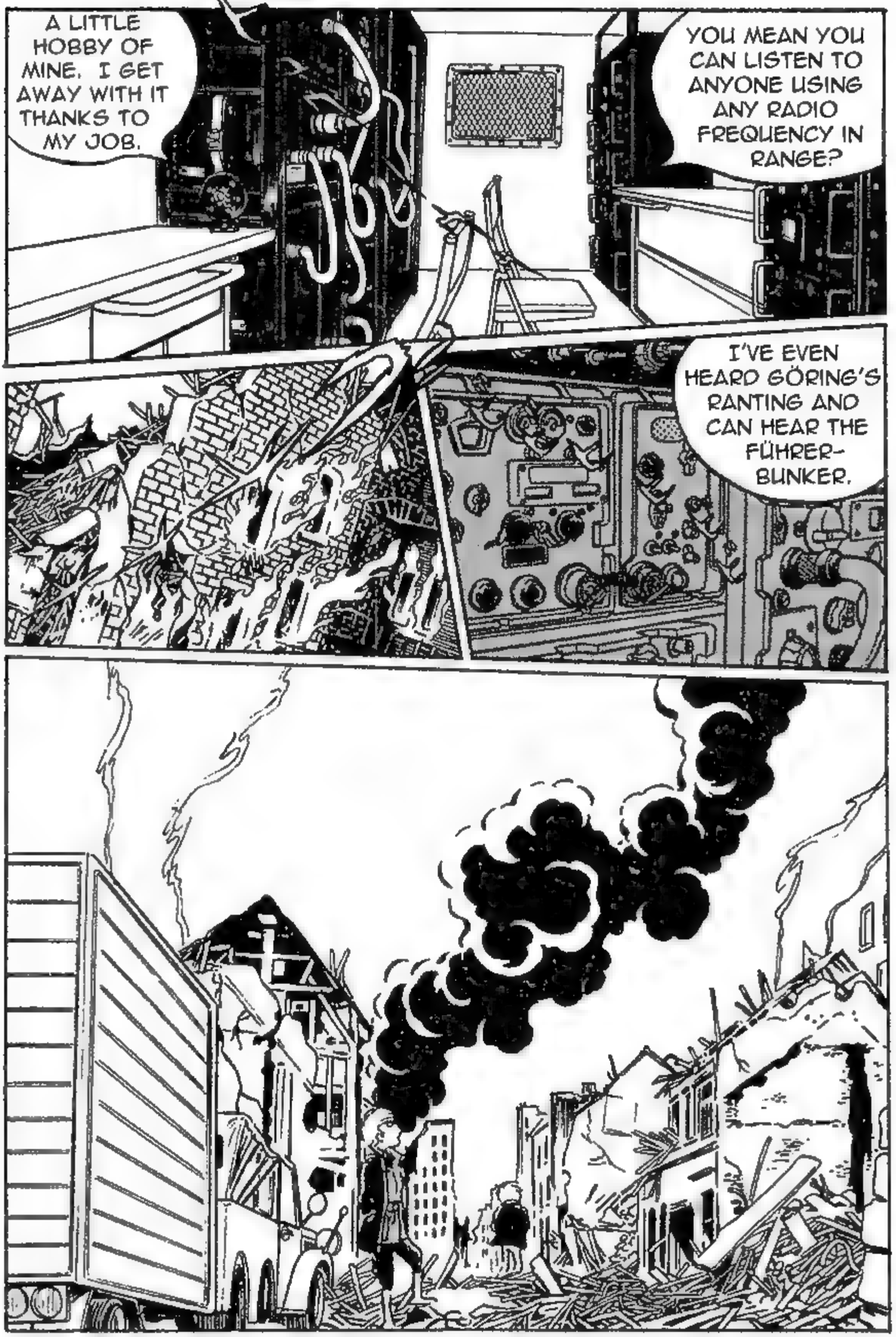
GET READY TO INTER -CEPT!

FROM GG77 TO GX8, 220 B-17S ARE HEADING EAST!

WHA-?

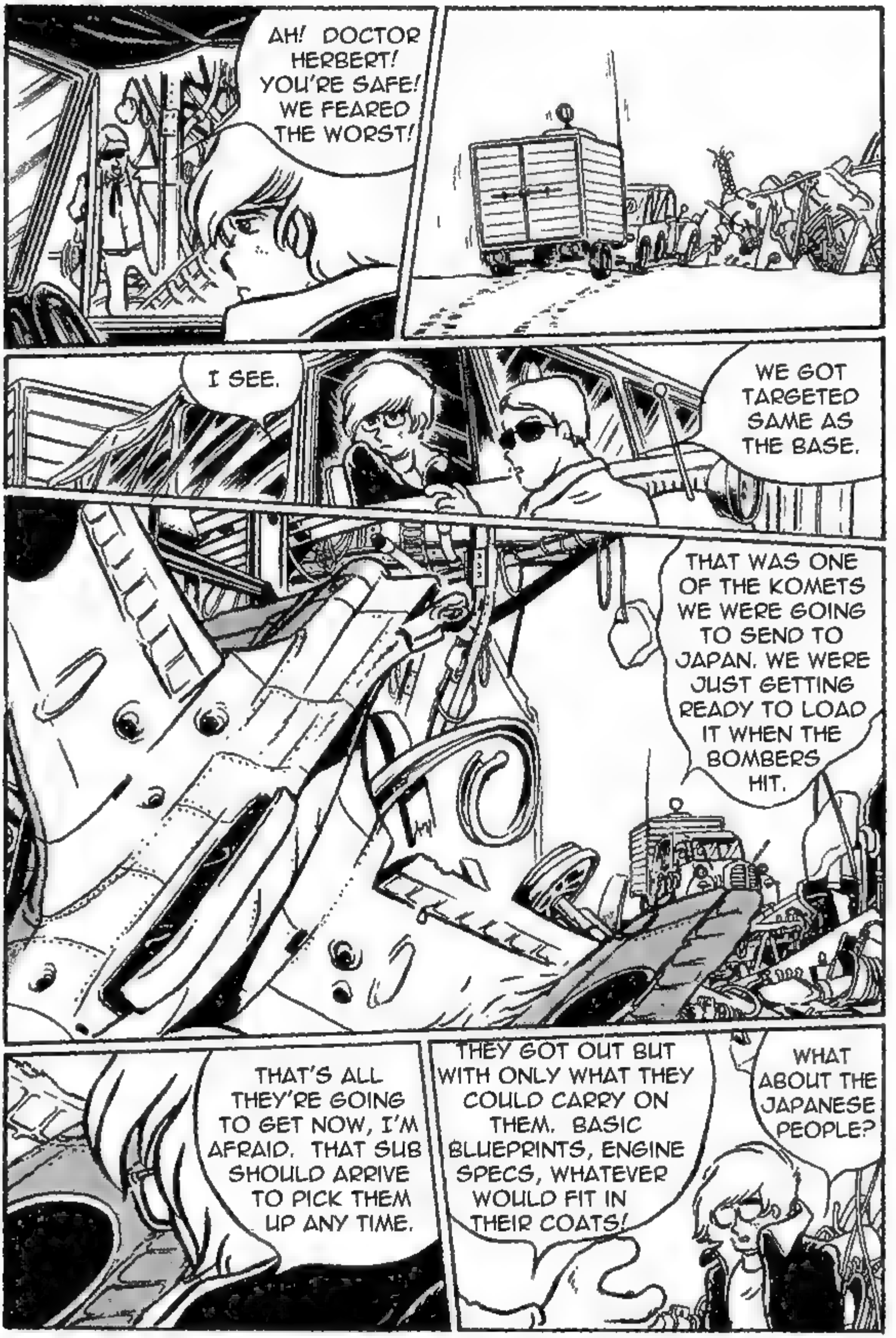
IT'LL BE FINE AND WE MAY NEED IT!

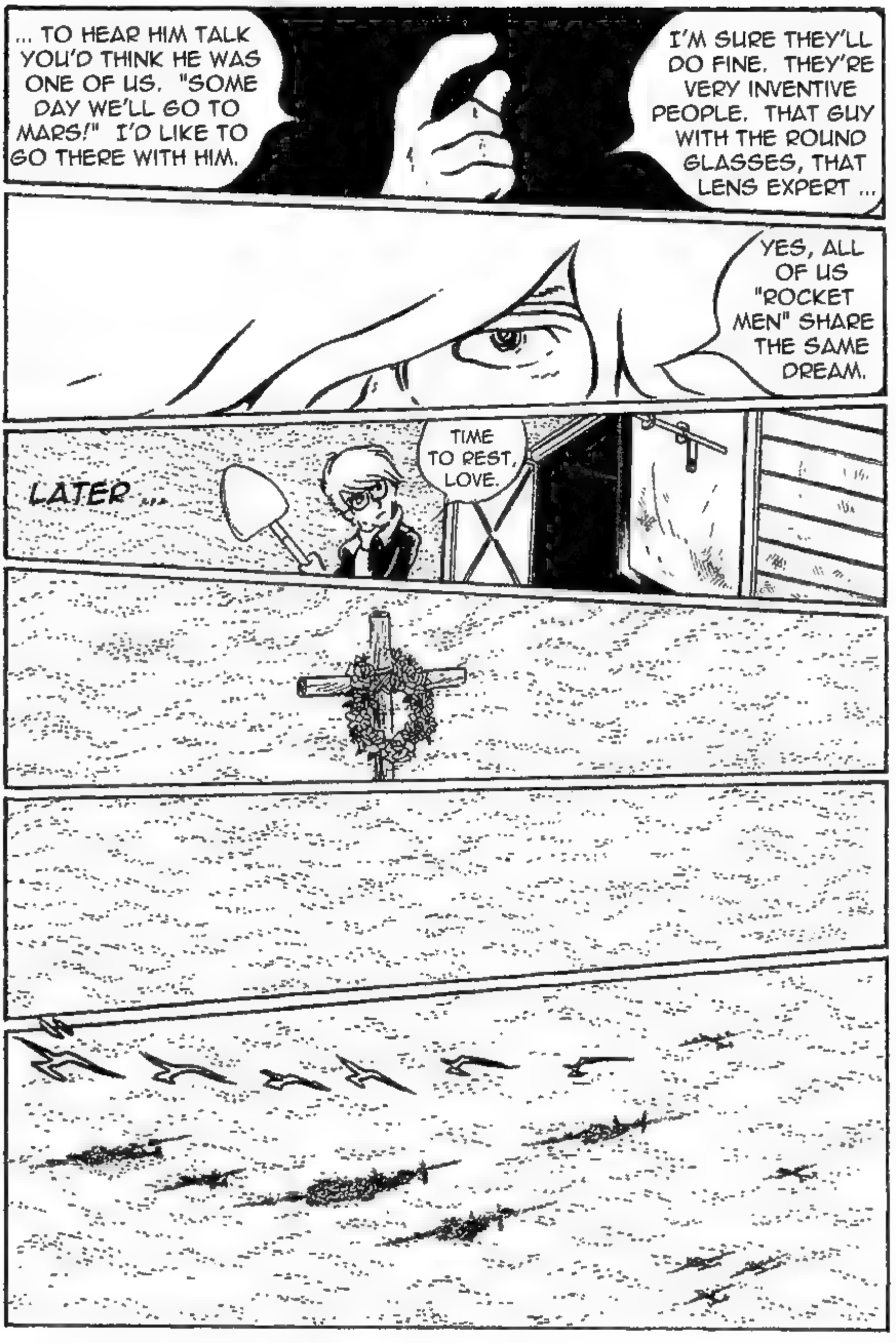
YOUR TRAILER IS PACKED FULL OF RADIO GEAR. WANT TO LEAVE IT?

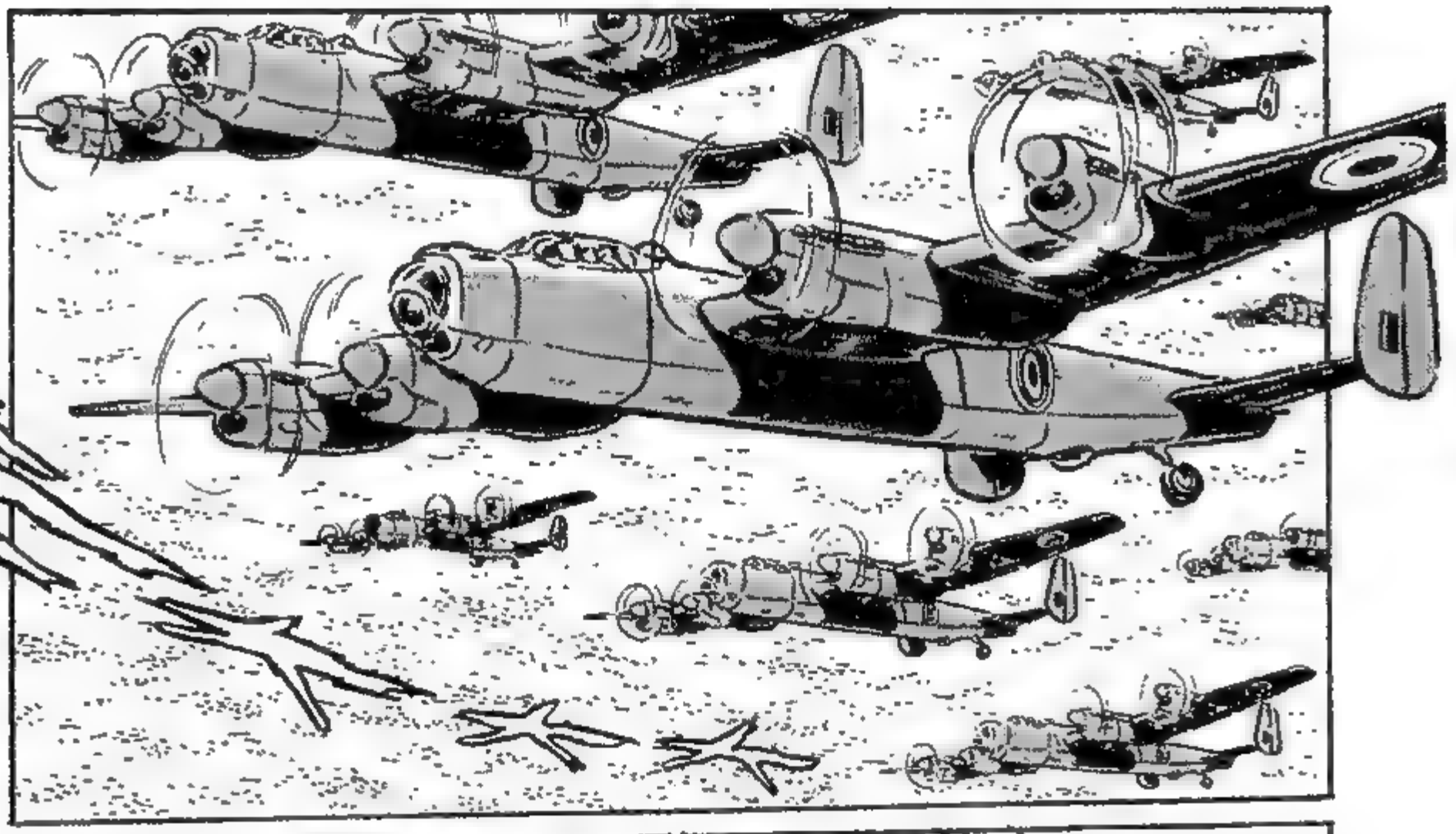

A LITTLE HOBBY OF MINE. I GET AWAY WITH IT THANKS TO MY JOB.
YOU MEAN YOU CAN LISTEN TO ANYONE USING ANY RADIO FREQUENCY IN RANGE?
I'VE EVEN HEARD GÖRING'S RANTING AND CAN HEAR THE FÜHRER-BUNKER.

REMEMBER HANNAH?
HANS ...
WE WERE TO BE MARRIED.
HOW COULD I FORGET HANNAH, YOUR ... OH GOD.
REMEMBER HOW WE USED TO SWIM TOGETHER IN THE ELBE AT WALPURGIS CASTLE?
SHE ... SHE WAS SO ....
IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU, ANYTHING ....
I'M SO SORRY, HANS! TRULY I AM!

I NEED TO BE ALONE RIGHT NOW. OKAY?
WANT ME TO DRIVE?
I ... I'M HEADING BACK TO THE INSTITUTE, RIEDEL.
I'LL BE THERE.
I WILL. I'LL BE BACK AT THE BASE IN A COUPLE OF DAYS.
SURE. SAY GOODBYE TO HANNAH FOR ME, OKAY?
I WILL, HANS.
STAY ALIVE, RIEDEL, UNTIL I GET BACK! DO YOU HEAR?


AH! DOCTOR HERBERT! YOU'RE SAFE! WE FEARED THE WORST!
I SEE.
WE GOT TARGETED SAME AS THE BASE.
THAT WAS ONE OF THE KOMETS WE WERE GOING TO SEND TO JAPAN. WE WERE JUST GETTING READY TO LOAD IT WHEN THE BOMBERS HIT.
THAT'S ALL THEY'RE GOING TO GET NOW, I'M AFRAID. THAT SUB SHOULD ARRIVE TO PICK THEM UP ANY TIME.
THEY GOT OUT BUT WITH ONLY WHAT THEY COULD CARRY ON THEM. BASIC BLUEPRINTS, ENGINE SPECS, WHATEVER WOULD FIT IN THEIR COATS!
WHAT ABOUT THE JAPANESE PEOPLE?


... TO HEAR HIM TALK YOU'D THINK HE WAS ONE OF US. "SOME DAY WE'LL GO TO MARS!" I'D LIKE TO GO THERE WITH HIM.
I'M SURE THEY'LL DO FINE. THEY'RE VERY INVENTIVE PEOPLE. THAT GUY WITH THE ROUND GLASSES, THAT LENS EXPERT ...
YES, ALL OF US "ROCKET MEN" SHARE THE SAME DREAM.
LATER ...
TIME TO REST, LOVE.



AND EACH OF OURS HAS ONLY EIGHT MINUTES OF FLIGHT TIME.

FORTY.

FLIGHT READY KOMETS?

RIEDEL! HUGE FORMATION OF 500 ENEMY AIRCRAFT EN ROUTE TO US!

HERBERT! CAN IT WAIT?! I'VE GOT TO—

THIS ONE CAN GO SUPERSONIC BUT IT CUTS FLIGHT TIME IN HALF.

THE NEW ENGINE! YOU DID IT!

I BROUGHT YOU A NEW ONE! FLY WITH THIS!

I WANT TO GO WITH YOU, RIEDEL. PLEASE.

I SEE THIS ONE IS A TWO-SEATER. WHAT ARE YOU--?

IT'S OKAY. PLEASE LET ME FLY IN A ROCKET ONCE BEFORE I DIE.

YOU KNOW THE RISK!

AND WITHOUT, PROVIDED I DON'T GO SUPERSONIC AND CONSERVE -MY FUEL?

ABOUT FOUR AND A HALF MINUTES.

HOW MUCH FLIGHT TIME DO I HAVE CARRYING YOU?

ALMOST FIFTEEN MINUTES. LET'S GO!

RIEDEL, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?! YOU'VE GOT TO GO!!

NOT TOO MUCH HYDRA-ZINE, OKAY?

BE CAREFUL WITH THE FUEL MIXER!

OK, OK!

DID YOU SAY GOODBYE TO HANNAH FOR ME?

YES. THANK YOU.

QUESTION. WHY DOES YOUR SQUADRON HAVE FIREFLIES PAINTED ON THEIR TAILS?

WE BURN BRIGHT BUT ONLY FOR A WHILE.

IT'S ALL RIGHT.

OH! I'M SO SORRY! FORGIVE ME.

MY GIRLFRIEND. SHE LIVED IN DRESDEN. SHE DIED WHEN IT WAS FIRE-BOMBED.

WHO CAME UP WITH THAT? IT'S PERFECT.

LET'S TEACH 'EM WHAT SPEED IS!

THEY LOOK SO SLOW!

YOU'VE ONLY GOT FOUR--NO, THREE MINUTES! MAKE THE MOST OF IT, RIEDEL!

BAM BOOM

GREAT!!! BUT WAY TOO SHORT!!!

WELL? HOW'D YOU LIKE IT, HERBERT?

I WILL! THANKS AGAIN, RIEDEL!!

SO MAKE A BETTER ONE!

THEY'RE HEADING FOR THE AIRFIELD!

DAMMIT! ALLIED TANKS!!

IF I TIME IT RIGHT, I CAN LAND AHEAD OF THEM ...

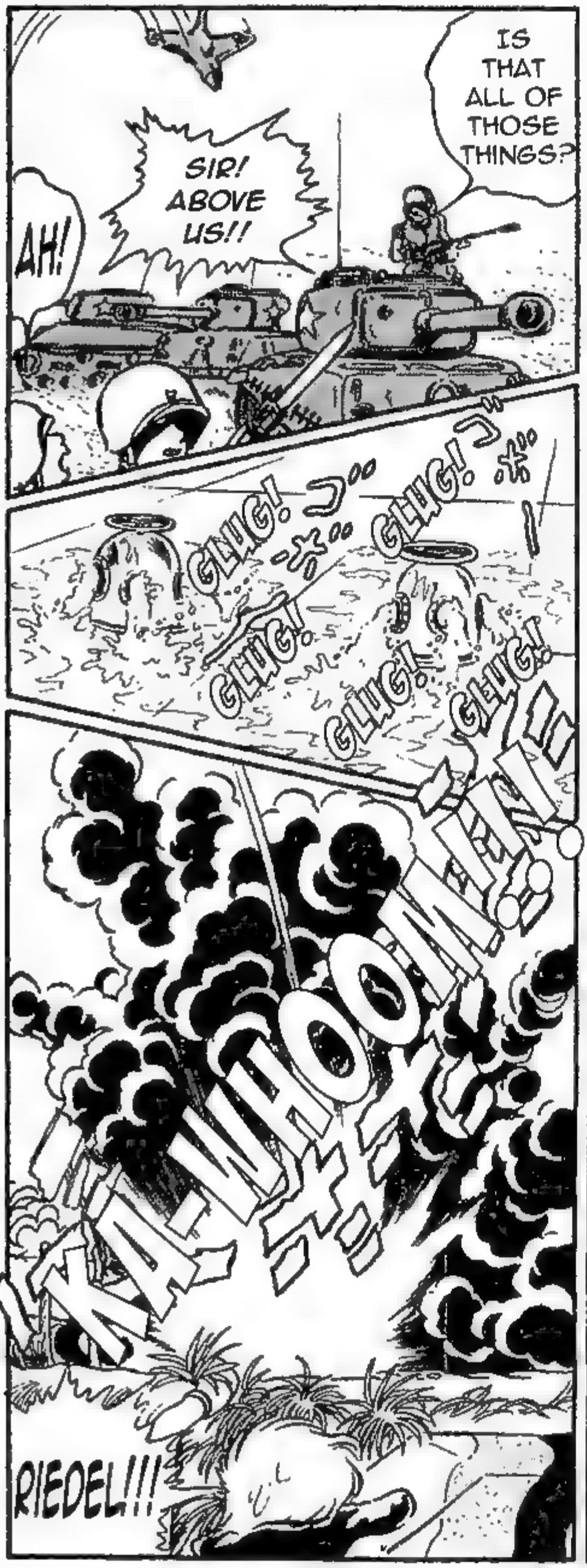
I'M ALMOST OUT OF FUEL, HERBERT!

... YOU CAN HELP REFUEL FROM THE UNDERGROUND TANKS, AND I CAN GO AGAIN!

THEN LET'S HURRY BEFORE THOSE TANKS GET HERE!!!

AT LEAST THE PUMPING STATION'S GOOD!

GLAD TO HELP, RIEDEL. WHAT A MESS!


AH!
SIR! ABOVE US!!
IS THAT ALL OF THOSE THINGS?
GLUG!
GLUG!
GLUG!
GLUG!
GLUG!
KA-THOOM!!!
RIEDEL!!!

SHE'S ALL FUELED UP AND--
HEY!
THIS LAST IS A SOLO FLIGHT, HANS! LIVE AND GO TO MARS FOR US BOTH!
BLARGH!
SPLASH!!

... WAFTED INTO THE SKY, NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN.

A DEAD GERMAN WOMAN'S IMPRESSION BECAME REALITY ON THAT NIGHT, AS THOSE SEEMING FIREFLIES OF THE ELBE ...

TO MANY WHO SAW THE KOMET AIRFIELD BURN, IT LOOKED AS IF THOUSANDS OF FIREFLIES WERE RISING INTO THE SKY. IT WAS ONLY HOT CINDERS RISING, OF COURSE, BUT ALL THE SAME ....

EVERY TIME I THINK OF IT, THAT SIGHT STIRS MY HEART.

BOTH BANKS OF THE ELBE WERE LIT BY THAT GREAT FIREBALL. ONCE IT WAS DONE THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT.

DAS ENDE

(Published in Big Comic Original, October 5, 1976 issue)

MANDELISMS

And so ends another one of the great "German" tales from Matsumoto that was included ın *The Cockpit*, one that ın my opınıon ranks rıght up there wıth "The Black Knıght of Berlın" and "My Youth ın Arcadıa" as among the best of the bunch Lıke those ıt has all the elements that makes Matsumoto's best "German" tales so great The old-fashıoned honor and nobılity of "true" Germans, maıntaınıng character and dıgnity whenever faced wıth great tragedy, the best of German World War II era technology gettıng ıts fıfteen mınutes or so (or less ın the Me-163 Komet's case) to shıne ın the spotlıght, and so on and so on For what more could you ask? This is another one of those World War II tales of Matsumoto that hıs Western fans have long wanted to have in an Englısh language versıon, and whıle thıs ınıtıal effort ısn't all that ıt could be (for reasons I've explaıned earlıer) I still trıed to gıve ıt my best wıth what resources I had avaılable I hope you welcome the effort.

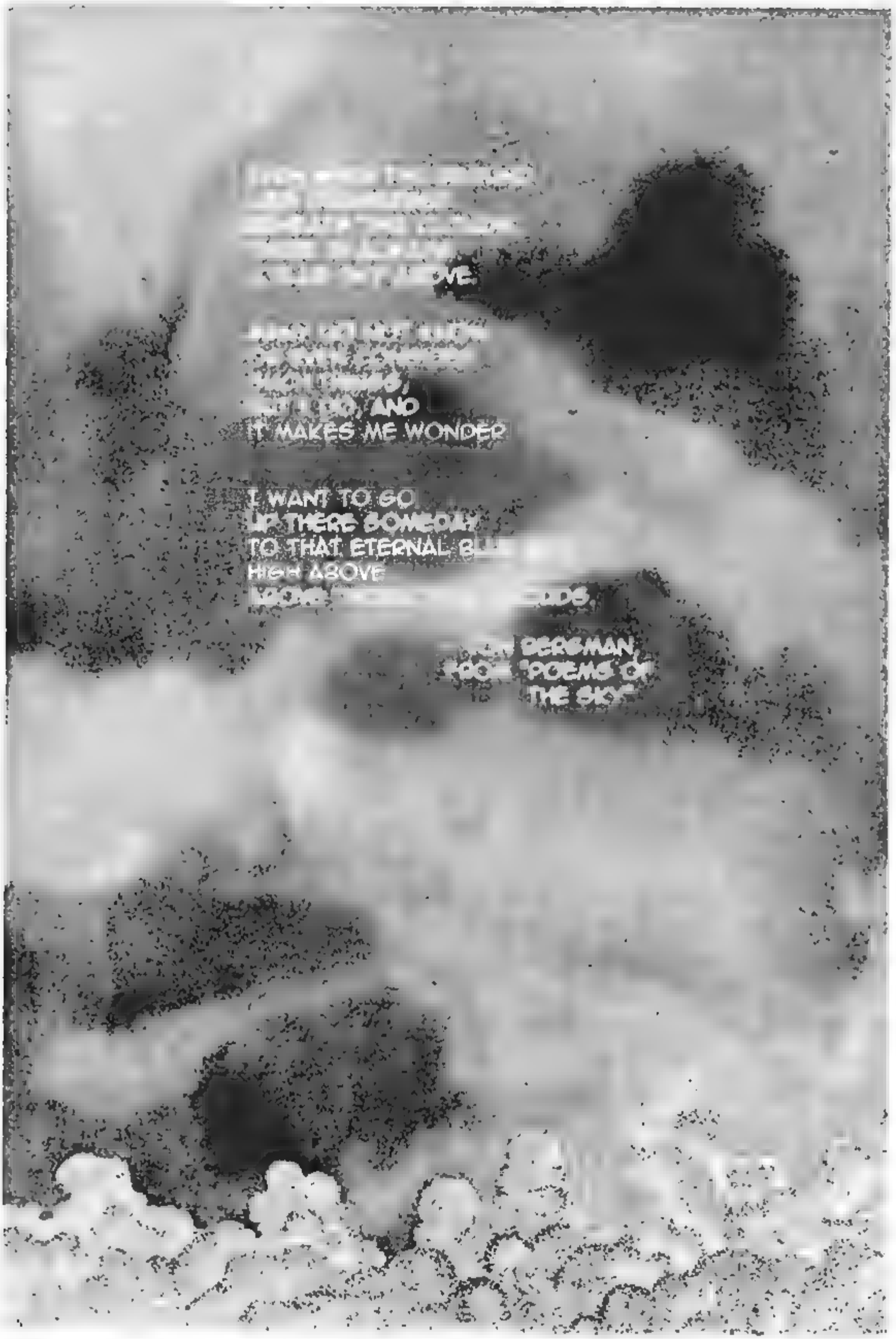
I thınk the bıggest surprıse for me ın fınally gettıng thıs ın an Englısh language versıon, even ın a pıdgın "Engrısh" versıon I had to clean up consıderably (but I thank you all the same, Google Translate AI), ıs that "Fıreflıes on the Elbe" ıs a prequel of sorts to the more famous "My Youth ın Arcadıa " What connects the two tales, ın case you mıssed ıt earlıer, ıs the character of Nıkon optıcs expert Tsuyoshı Daıba He's featured ın "My Youth ın Arcadıa" but only gets passıng mentıon here, and you have to be payıng attentıon to catch ıt Remember Hans Herbert descrıbıng the group of Japanese experts vısıtıng the Komet factory and how one of them was an eager lıttle guy "wıth round glasses" who also shared Herbert's dream of rockets? Yep Same guy You Leıjıverse fans wıll have lots of fun wıth that connectıon, rest assured

In addıtıon to the German's Messerschmitt Me-163 Komet, whıch ıs the obvıous star of thıs tale ın terms of featured mılıtary technology, three other aırcraft also get secondary features and three are Brıtısh the deHavılland Mosquıto medium fıghter-bomber, the Hawker Typhoon ground attack fıghter, and the Avro Lancaster strategıc bomber We've seen the Mosquıto before ("'88' at Poınt-Blank Range") and we'll be seeıng ıt agaın before The Cockpıt ıs done, but thıs ıs the fırst appearance of any kınd for both the Typhoon and the Lancaster Just notıng that for all of you *Cockpit* aırcraft watchers

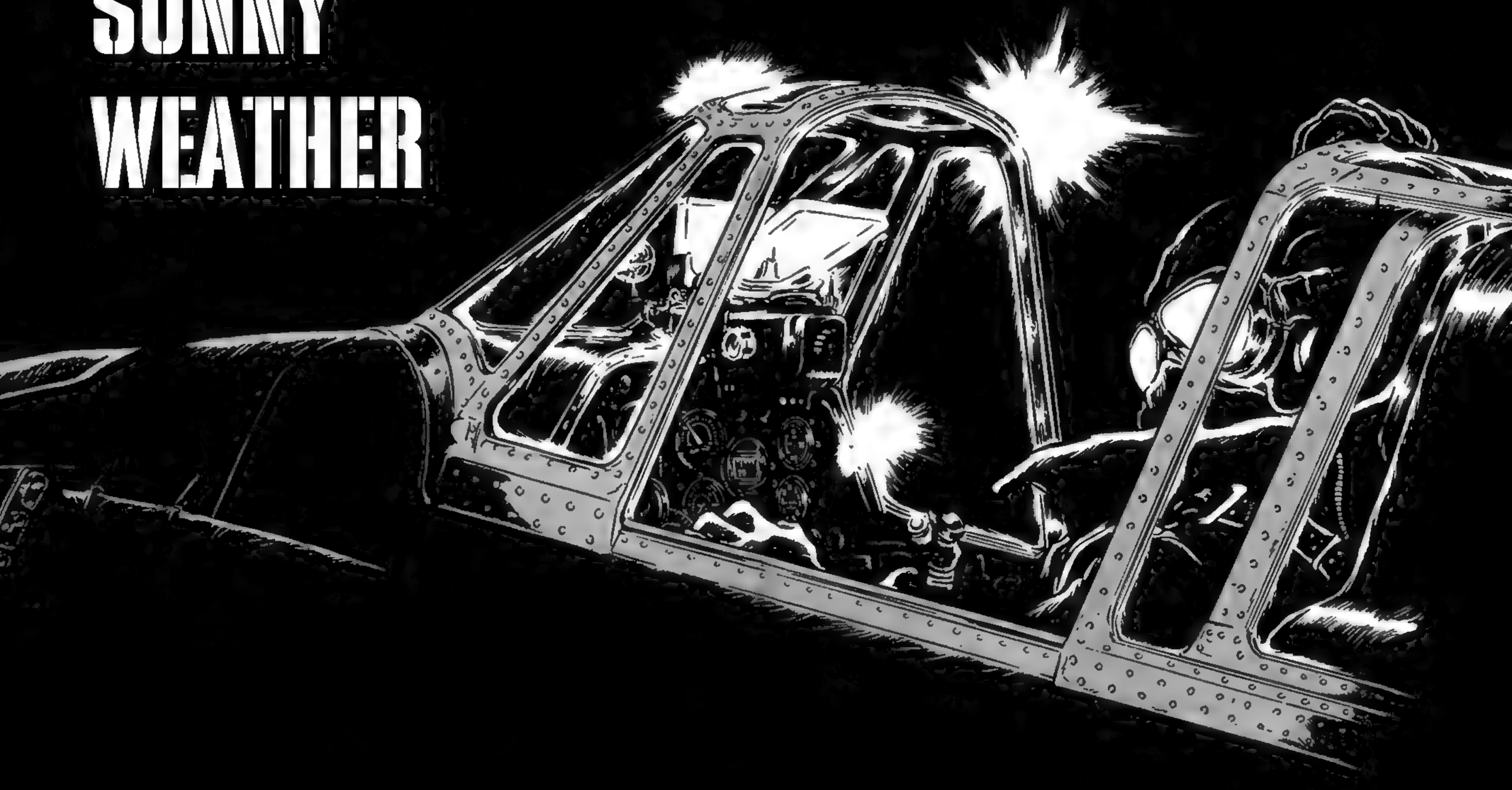
Thıs story contaıns a lot of hard factual data on the Komet and I hope I dıdn't oblıterate ıt too much ın my Englısh adaptatıon In fact ıt's got so much and so accurately depıcts how ıt really operated ın combat I'm surprısed ıt dıdn't get ıncluded as part of the OVA adaptatıon a whıle back Then agaın that would have been one German tale too many, I guess, and they could only pıck three to anımate Here's hopıng "Fıreflıes on the Elbe" wıll get some serıous consıderatıon ıf they ever decıded to anımate any more tales from *The Cockpit*

TALES FROM THE COCKPIT

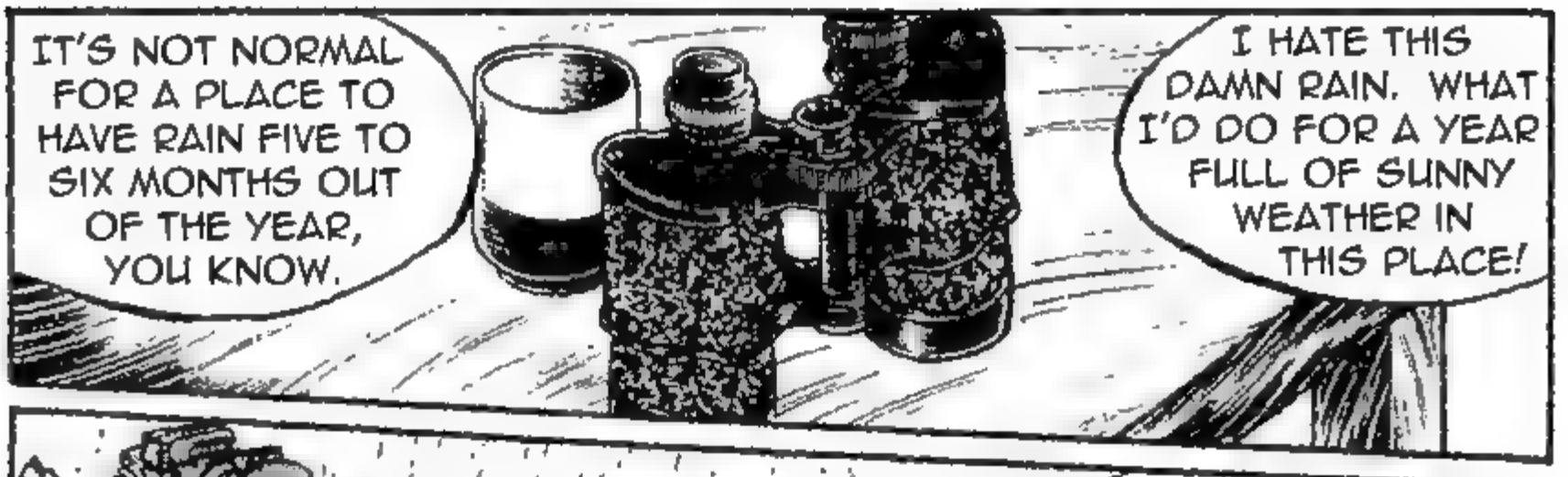
A YEAR FULL OF SUNNY WEATHER

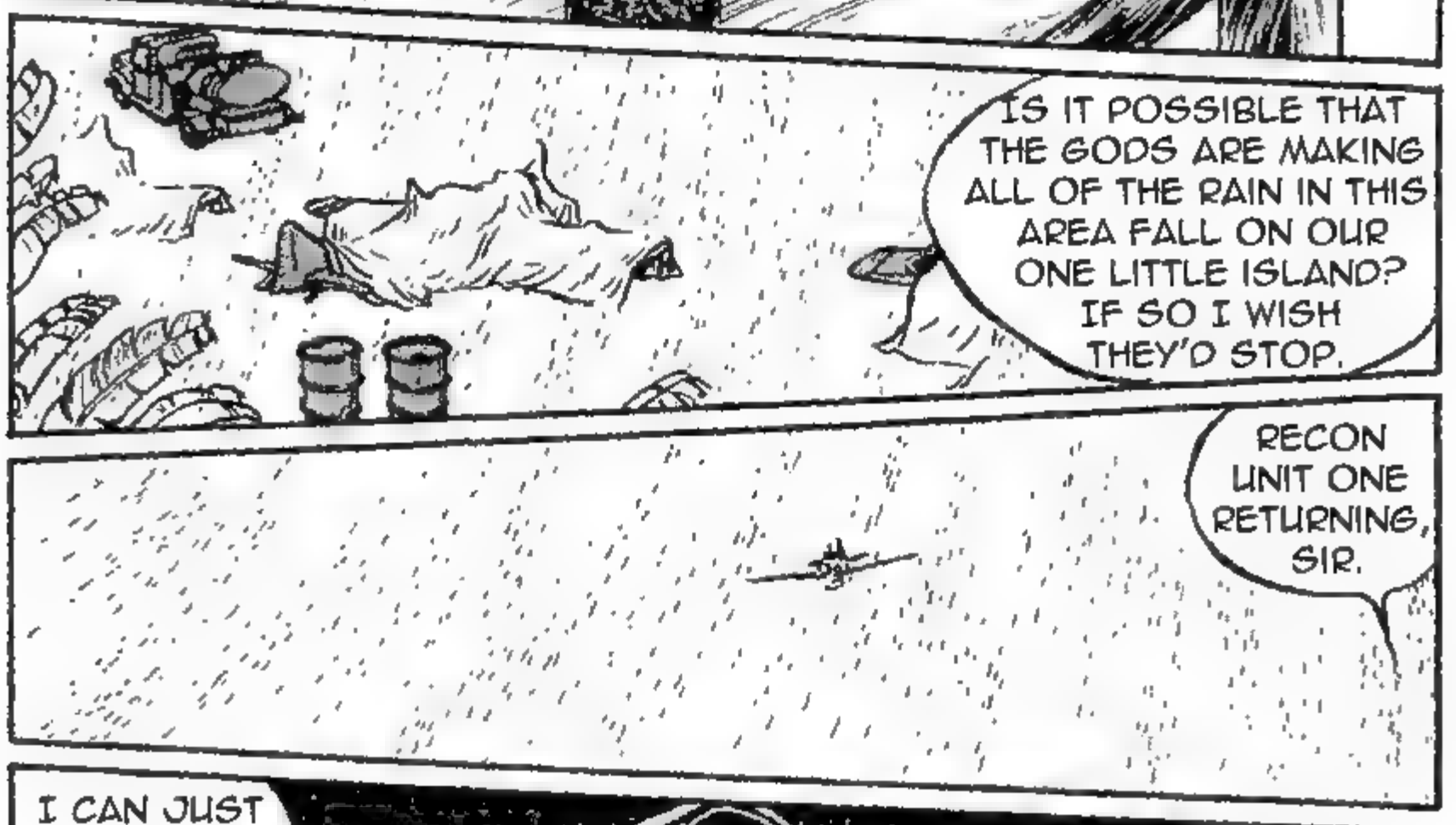

IT MAKES ME WONDER
I WANT TO GO
TO THAT ETERNAL
HIGH ABOVE
BERGMAN
POEMS OF
THE SKY

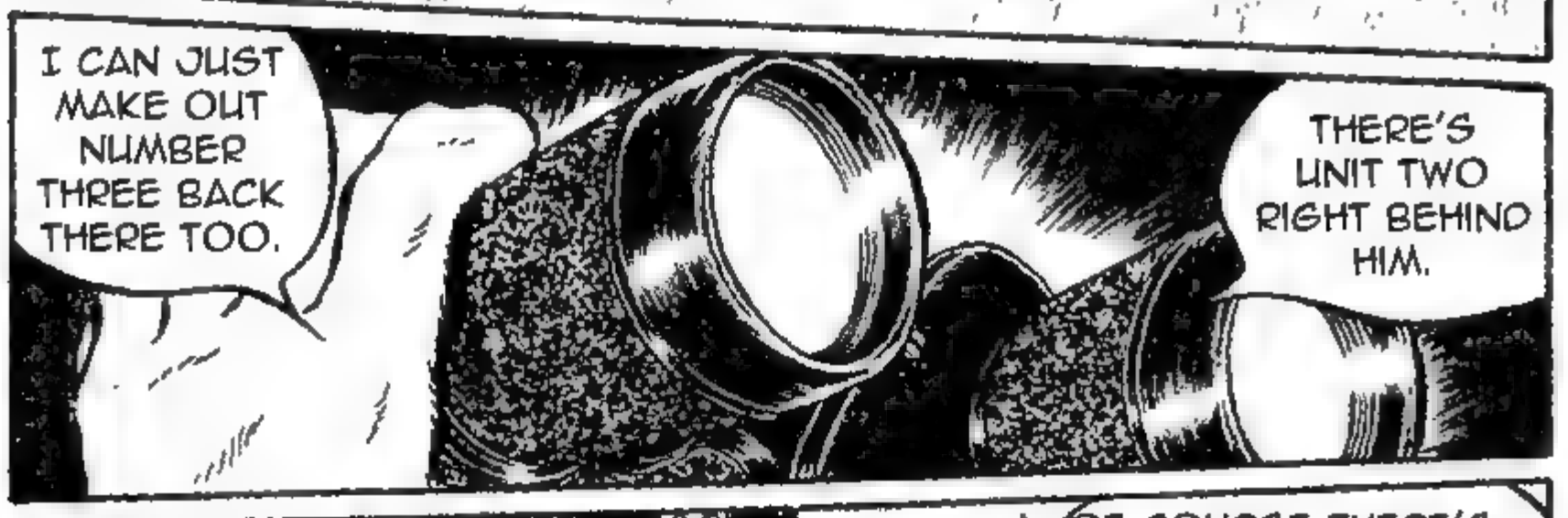
A YEAR OF SUNNY WEATHER

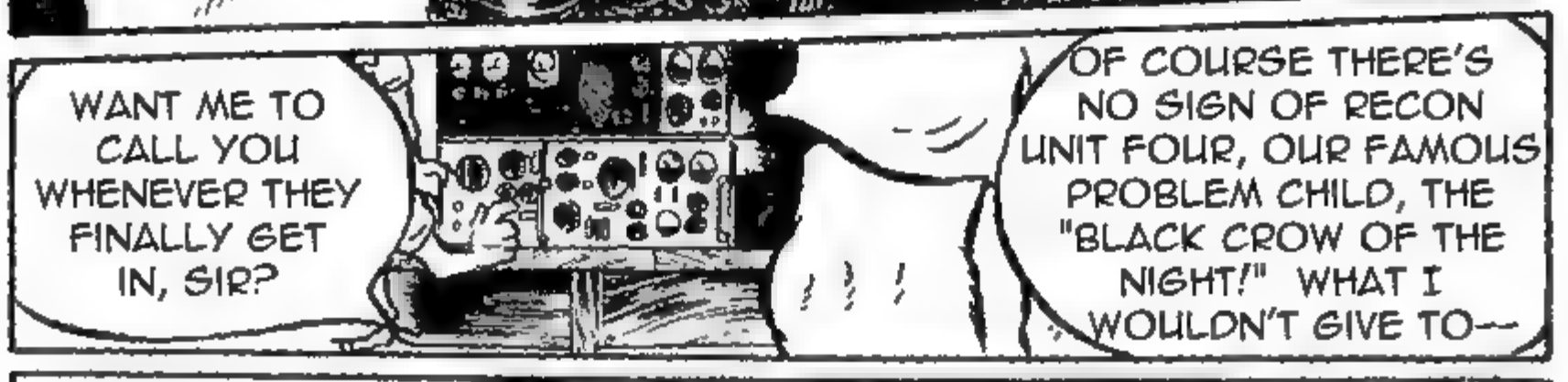


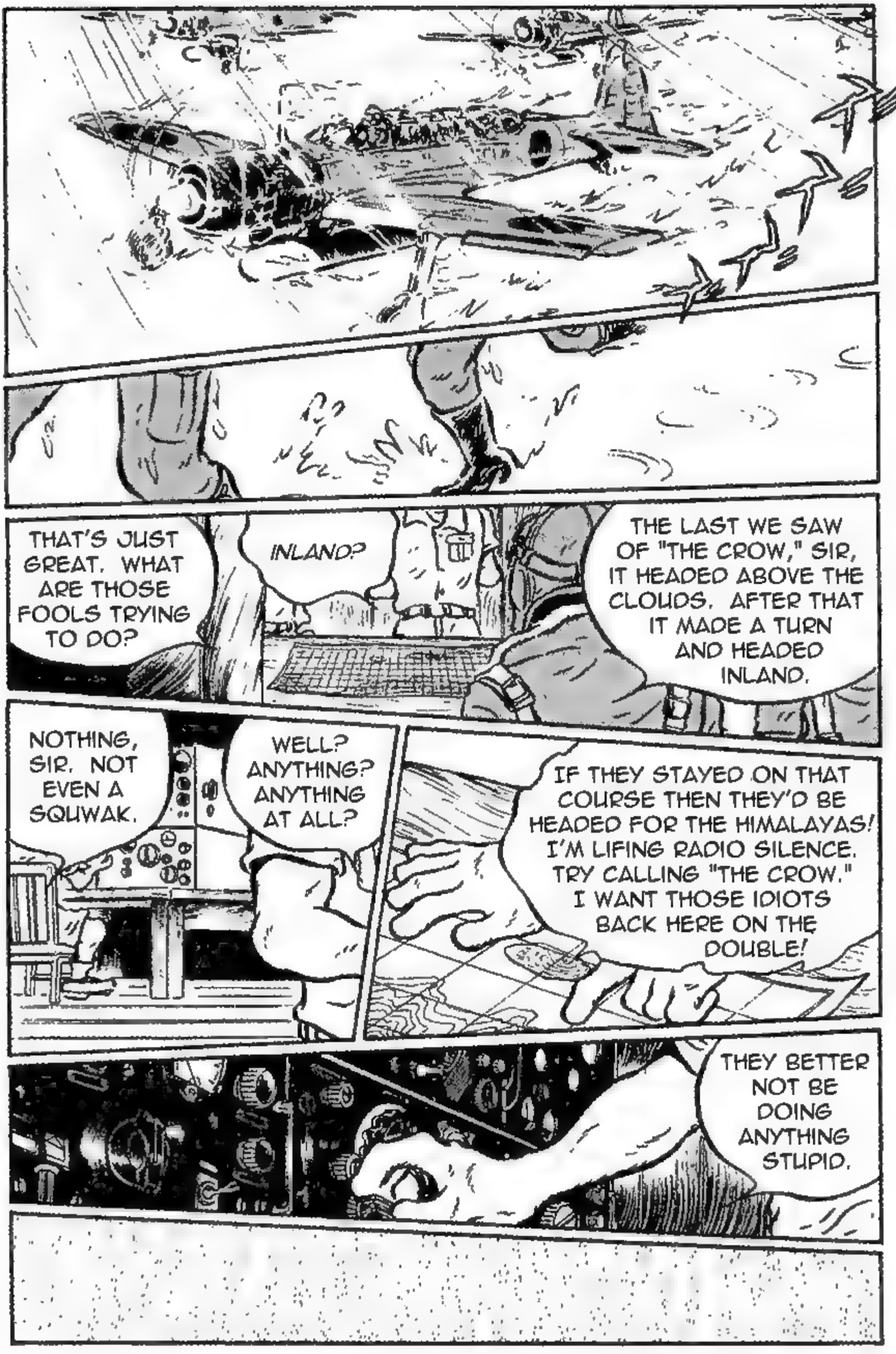
A YEAR FULL OF SUNNY WEATHER



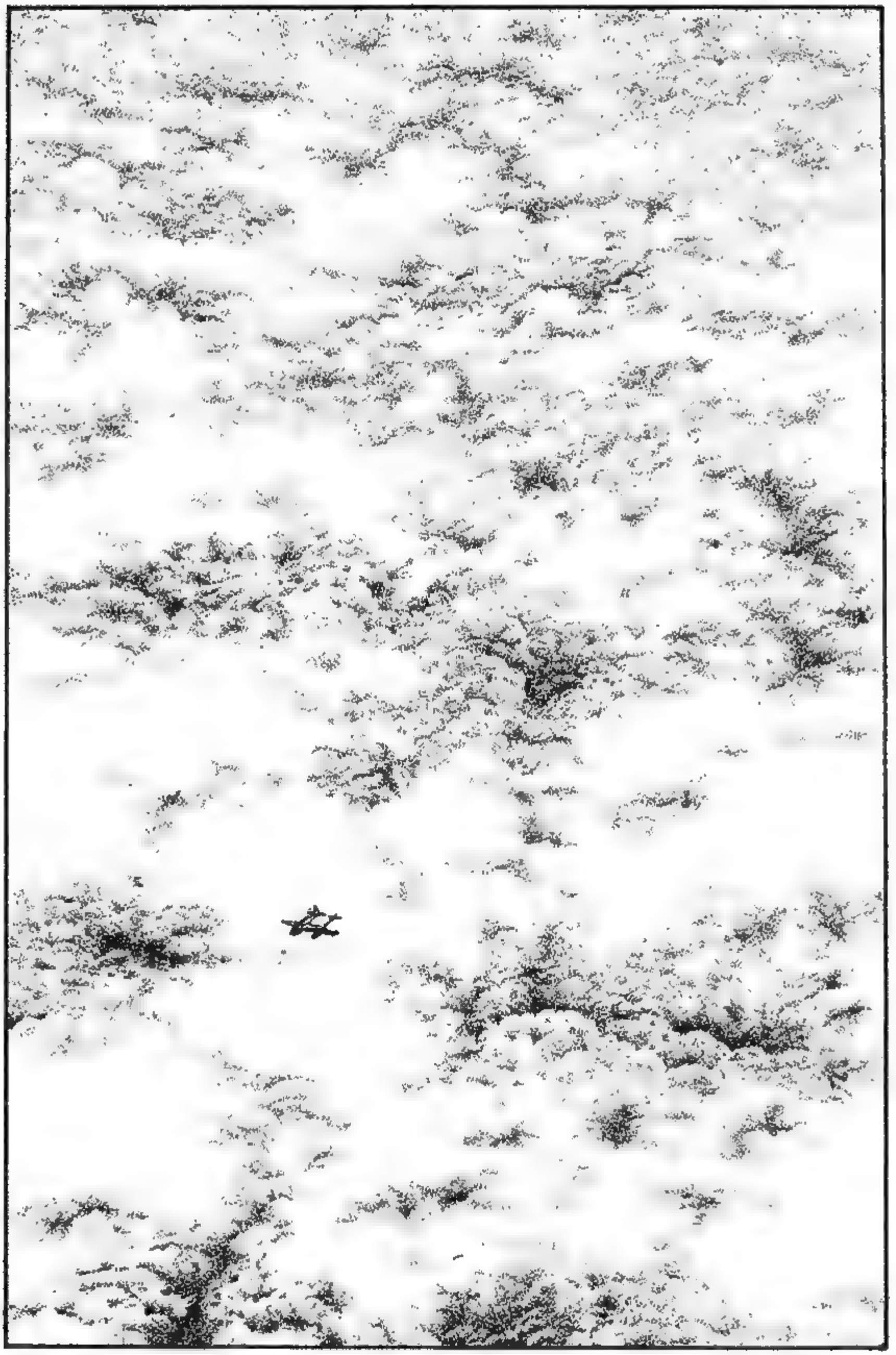







THAT'S JUST GREAT. WHAT ARE THOSE FOOLS TRYING TO DO?
INLAND?
THE LAST WE SAW OF "THE CROW," SIR, IT HEADED ABOVE THE CLOUDS. AFTER THAT IT MADE A TURN AND HEADED INLAND.
NOTHING, SIR. NOT EVEN A SQUWAK.
WELL? ANYTHING? ANYTHING AT ALL?
IF THEY STAYED ON THAT COURSE THEN THEY'D BE HEADED FOR THE HIMALAYAS! I'M LIFING RADIO SILENCE. TRY CALLING "THE CROW." I WANT THOSE IDIOTS BACK HERE ON THE DOUBLE!
THEY BETTER NOT BE DOING ANYTHING STUPID.

A YEAR FULL OF SUNNY WEATHER



HEY, SHUT YOUR HOLE! OUR COMPASS IS ALL FUCKED UP! YOU WANNA TRY TO FLY?

YOU MORON! WE'RE GOING THE WRONG WAY! WHY IN THE HELL DID YOU DO THAT?!?

MY ASS IS FREEZING!

AS IF YOU COULD EVER LEARN ... HEY, SHIMA? YOU'RE AWFULLY QUIET. ARE YOU STILL BACK THERE?

IT'S FROM THAT COLD AIR BLOWING IN THAT HOLE BELOW ME!

NOT TO MENTION THAT ONE OVEREAGER SPITFIRE THAT CHASED US ALMOST ALL THE WAY BACK BEFORE HE WAS SHOT DOWN.

YEAH, WE TOOK A LOT OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT HITS THAT LAST TIME OUT.

FROSTBITE OR RAIN AND MUD? YOUR CHOICE.
WELL I WISH THE GROUND CREW WOULD HAVE PATCHED IT! I'M GONNA GET FROSTBITE!
FUCKIN' "A!"
I'D LIKE TO DO THAT, BUT WITH OUR COMPASS OUT I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THE ANDAMAN ISLANDS ARE. GIVE ME A HINT?
RAIN AND MUD! GET ME OUTTA THIS DAMN PLANE! I'M FUCKIN' FREEZING BACK HERE!! C'MON, HURRY BACK!!!
WHAT ABOUT SIGHTING THE STARS? CAN YOU DO THAT?
I TRIED TO TELL THEM OUR COMPASS WAS BROKEN! "WE'LL FIX IT," THEY SAID, "RIGHT AFTER WE FIX THAT HOLE UNDER THE BACK OF YOUR PLANE!" RIGHT ... !
WE ARE SO FUCKED.
OH, LEMME THINK ... GOTTA TAKE OFF MY GLOVES TO COUNT ... UHH, ALMOST 10. YEAH, ALMOST 10, I'M SURE OF IT.
SHINTANI, BE HONEST. HOW MANY HOURS OF FLIGHT TIME HAVE YOU HAD? *REALLY* HAD?
WHAT STARS? IT'S BROAD DAYLIGHT! THE ONLY STAR OUT RIGHT NOW IS THE SUN!!

I'M EITHER GOING TO DIE IN A CRASH OR MY ASS IS GOING TO FREEZE OFF!

WHAT?! WE'RE OUT OF FUEL?!

AND WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO IF WE RUN OUT, OH GREAT PILOT?!

WOW! WE'VE REALLY BURNED UP A LOT OF FUEL FLYING THIS FAR OUT FROM BASE!

HEY! AN ENEMY PLANE!

DON'T FORGET TO MAKE THE *RIGHT* TURN THIS TIME, YOU IDIOT! I'M FREEZING MY ASS OFF BACK HERE!

HEY! HE'S PROBABLY HEADING BACK TO HIS OWN BASE, AND THAT'S NORTHWEST OF OURS! ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS FOLLOW HIM BACK! IT'S THAT EASY!

AMERICAN TBF TORPEDO BOMBER!

GOOD IDEA! ALL RIGHT, EVERYONE! DIVE! DIVE! AH-OO-GAH! AH-OO-GAH!

... HE WON'T SEE US!

SHINTANI! BETTER SINK INTO THE CLOUDS LIKE A SUBMARINE TO FOLLOW HIM! THAT WAY ...

IF I FREEZE MY BALLS OFF AND CAN'T HAVE ANY KIDS BECAUSE OF YOU, SHINTANI, I'M GOING TO FIND YOU AFTER THE WAR AND CHOP YOUR BALLS OFF! GET US HOME!

OH, THAT'S PERFECT!

HEY, LOOK AT THAT! THAT'S THE INSIGNA OF THEIR SPECIAL RECON UNIT!

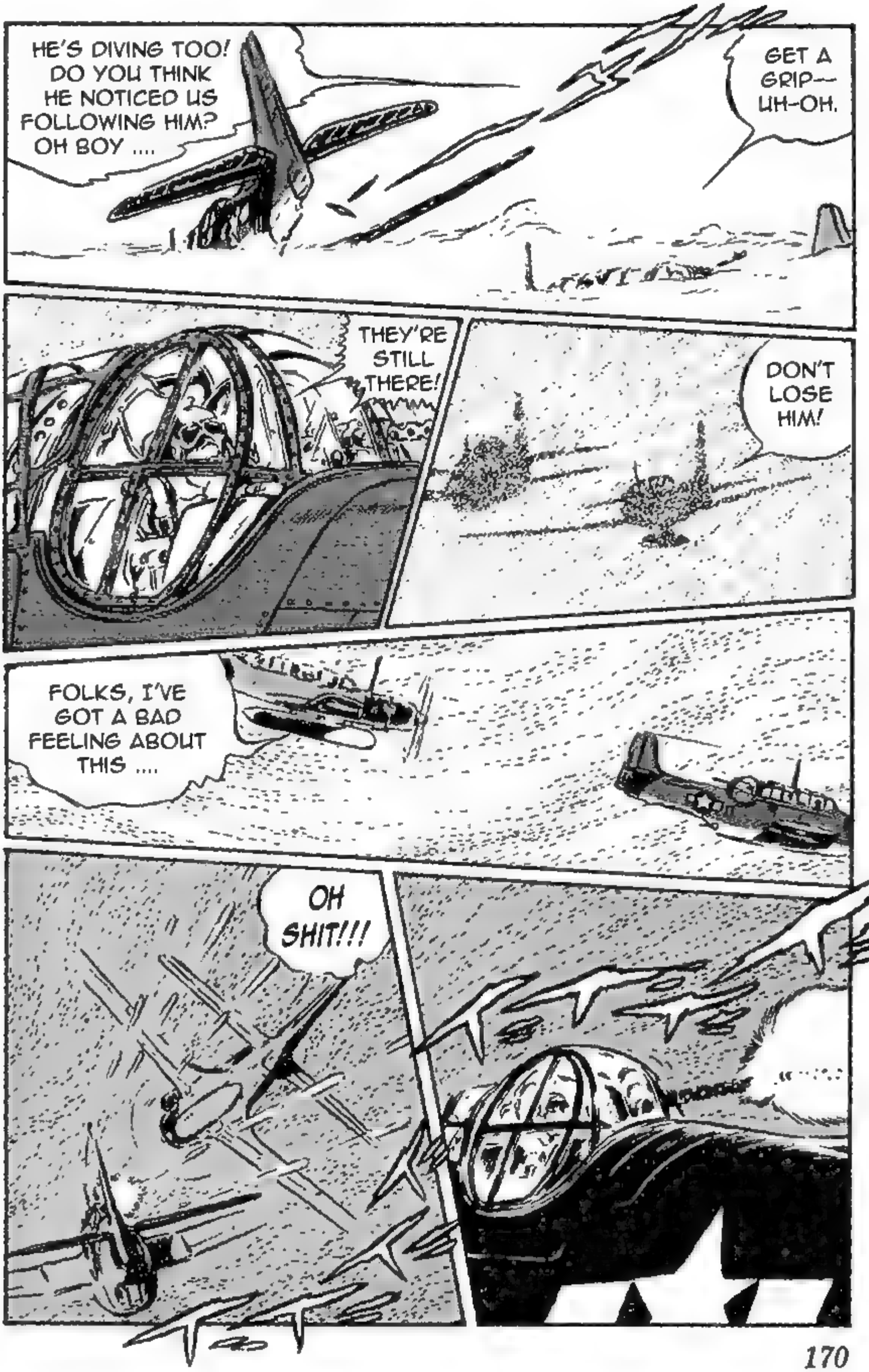
CHILL OUT MAN— OH, SORRY.

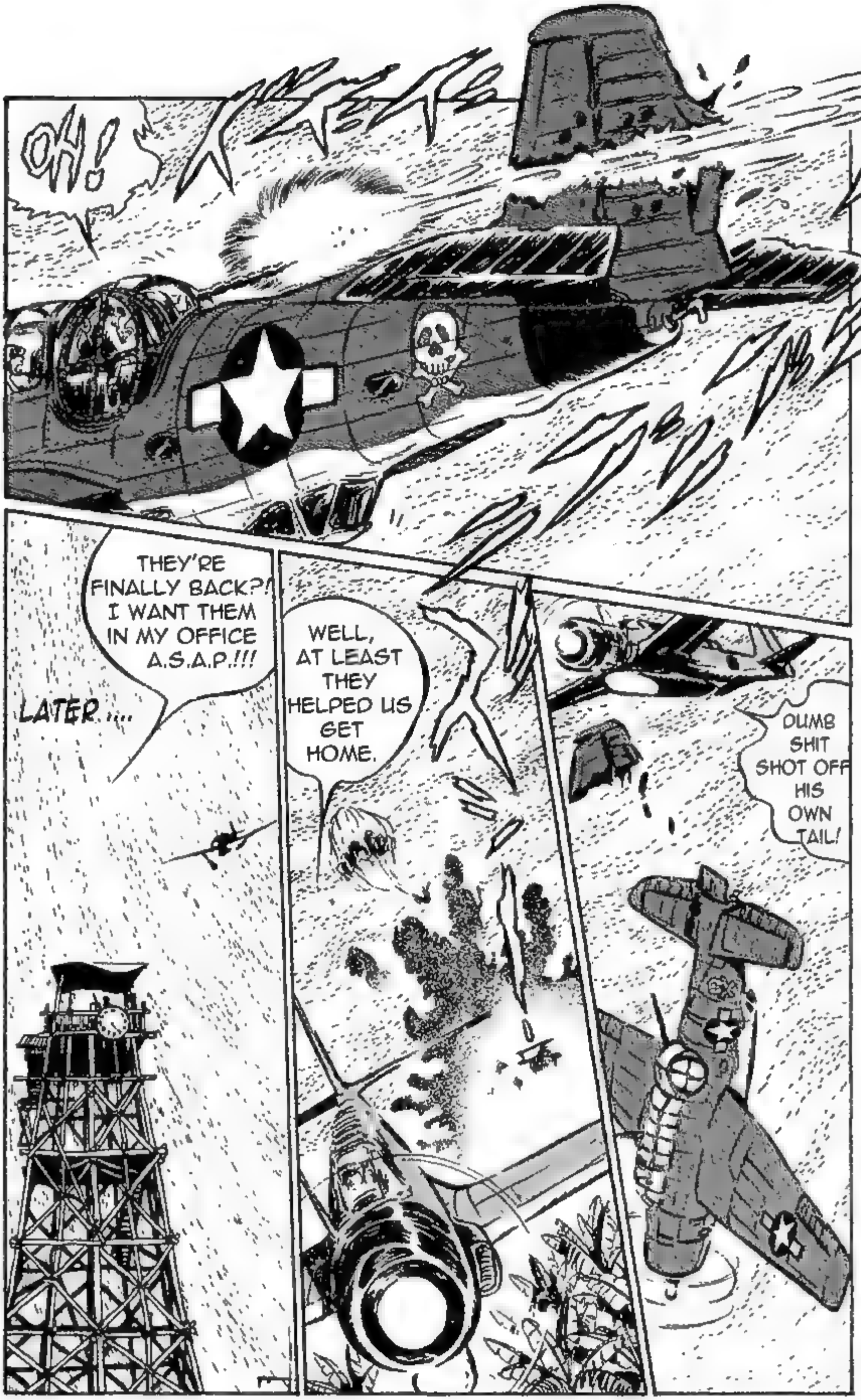
WANNA BET THEY'RE HEADING FOR ANDAMAN?

I'LL GET YOU, I SWEAR SHINTANI! I'LL GET YOU!!

YOU BETTER BE RIGHT, AND YOU BETTER PRAY MY CHILD FACTORY STILL WORKS WHEN WE GET BACK!

WHICH MEANS WE CAN FOLLOW THEM STRAIGHT HOME! DO YOU HEAR THAT, MORI? WE'RE HEADING HOME!


HE'S DIVING TOO! DO YOU THINK HE NOTICED US FOLLOWING HIM? OH BOY ....
GET A GRIP— UH-OH.
THEY'RE STILL THERE!
DON'T LOSE HIM!
FOLKS, I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS ....
OH SHIT!!!


OH!
THEY'RE FINALLY BACK?! I WANT THEM IN MY OFFICE A.S.A.P.!!!
LATER....
WELL, AT LEAST THEY HELPED US GET HOME.
DUMB SHIT SHOT OFF HIS OWN TAIL!

MY ASS HAS GONE NUMB! MY ASS HAS GONE NUMB!!! LET ME OUTTA HERE!!!!!

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR, WE COULDN'T SEE A THING! THE CLOUD COVER BELOW US WAS TOO THICK TO SEE THROUGH!

... SO AFTER ALL OF YOUR STUPID HIJINKS, DID YOU ACTUALLY MANAGE TO SEE ANYTHING?

AAH ...

CRACKLE!

HE'D HAVE BLAMED US FOR SOMETHING ELSE, YOU KNOW.

I SHOULD HAVE KEPT MY BIG MOUTH SHUT.

GET ME A ...

AND THE FAMILY JEWELS?

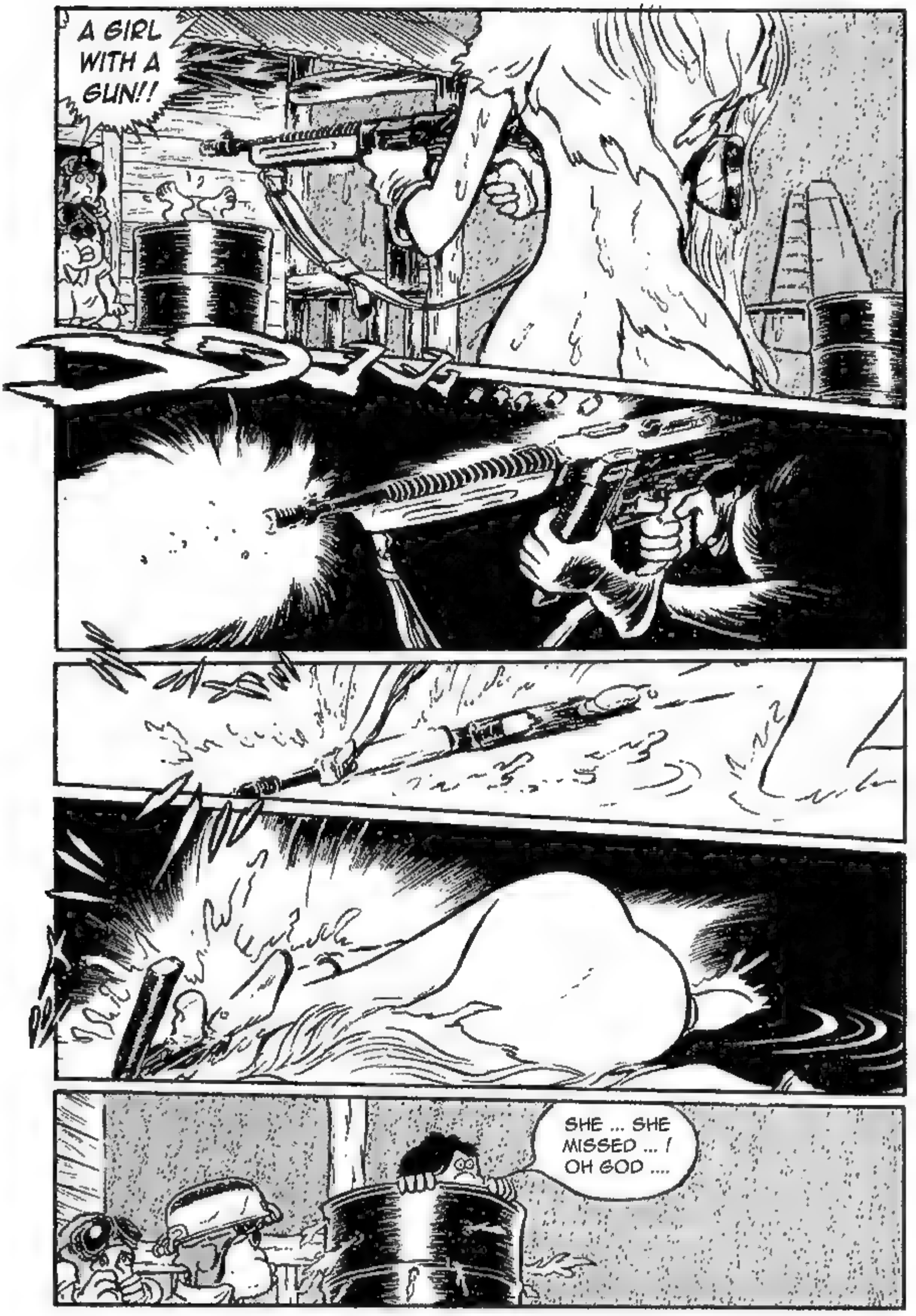
MM-HMH!

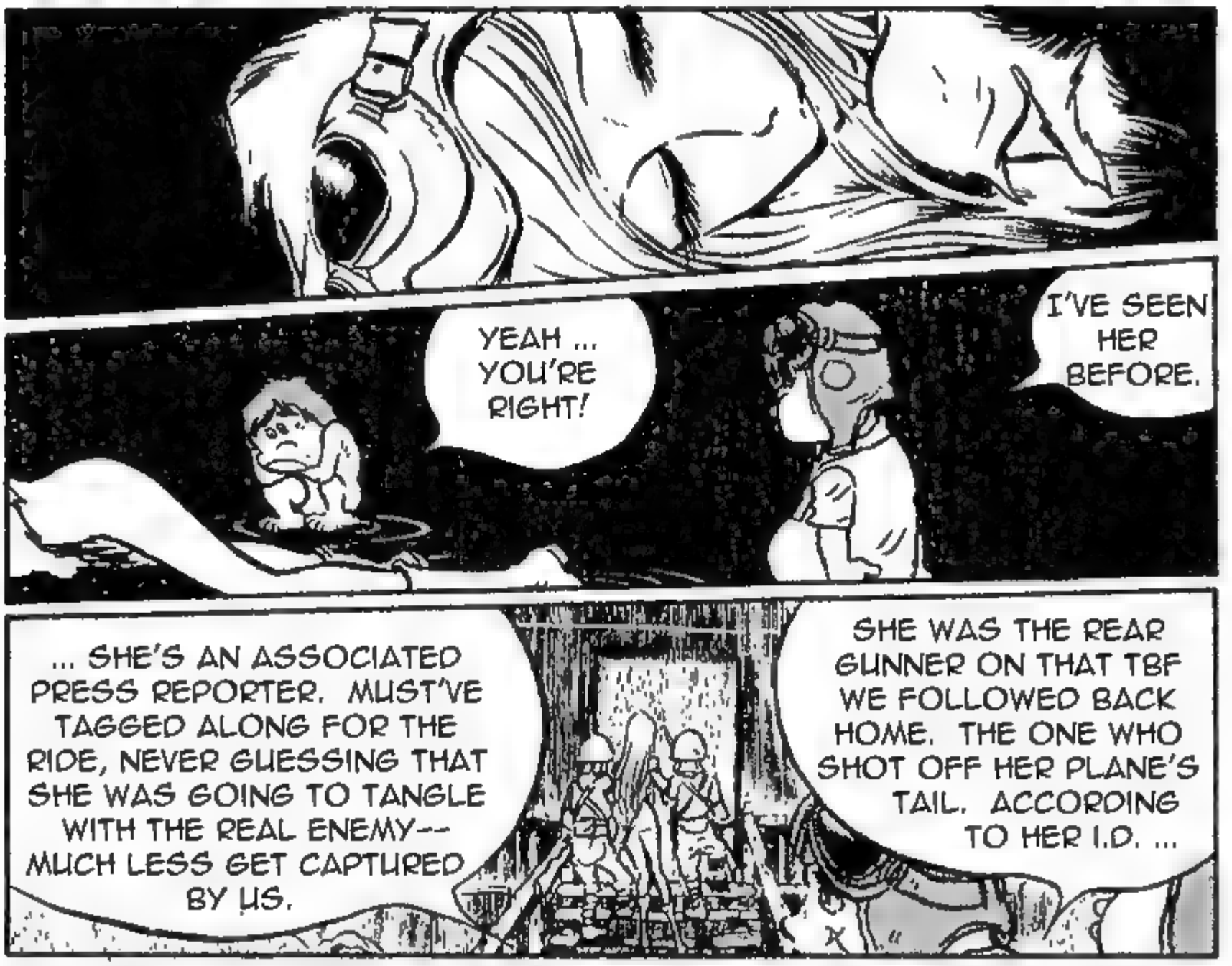
HOW'S THAT ASS OF YOURS? IS IT ANY WARMER NOW?

WHAT THE HELL?

SURE THING! SAY, I KNOW THIS LITTLE PLACE WHERE THE GIRLS ARE SO ...

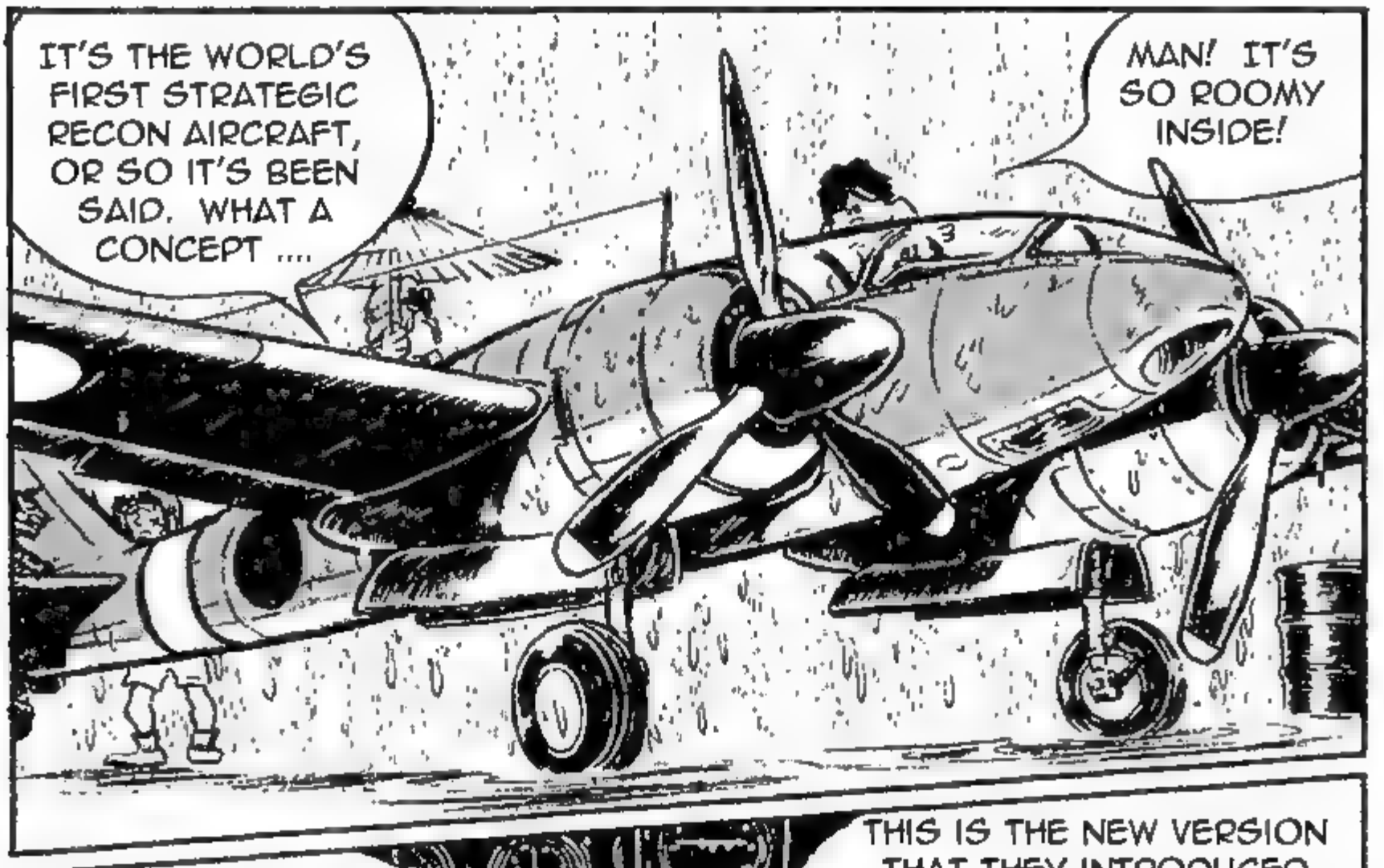
GIRL!!!


A GIRL WITH A GUN!!
SHE ... SHE MISSED ... ! OH GOD ....



(*) "TYPE 100" - THE MITSUBISHI KI-46 "DINAH," JAPAN'S FASTEST AND MOST ADVANCED RECON PLANE OF WORLD WAR II.

A YEAR FULL OF SUNNY WEATHER



ITS CURRENT PILOT WILL SHOW YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW! NOW NO MORE QUESTIONS! ANY OF YOU!!

BUT SIR! I DON'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT FLYING A TYPE 100!

WHAT'S HE UP TO?

THE WINGS KEEP YOU UP IN THE AIR. BOTH OF THEM WORKING TOGETHER IS WHAT MAKES THIS PLANE FLY.

THIS IS A PROPELLER. IT MAKES THE PLANE GO FORWARD.

THIS IS THE CONTROL YOKE. YOU TURN IT TO TURN, PULL IT TO GO UP, AND PUSH IT TO GO DOWN. THESE PEDALS ON THE FLOOR, THEY ALSO HELP YOU--

THIS IS THE PILOT'S COMPARTMENT. YOU SIT IN HERE AND USE THE CONTROLS TO FLY THE PLANE. IT'S VERY SIMPLE.

NOT VERY WELL, FROM WHAT YOUR C.O.** TOLD ME. SO SHUT UP AND JUST LISTEN TO ME, YOU HEAR?

LOOK, I'M NOT A TOTAL IDIOT. I KNOW HOW TO FLY.

YES, SIR! OF COURSE, SIR!

OF COURSE IF EVERYTHING FAILS AND YOU FIND YOURSELF OUT OF CONTROL, YOU KNOW THE OLD SAYING. "WHEN IN DANGER, WHEN IN DOUBT, SPIN IN CIRCLES, SCREAM AND SHOUT."

YOU TREAT HER RIGHT AND SHE'LL ALWAYS BRING YOU HOME.

BUT SERIOUSLY ... THIS ISN'T LIKE THOSE NAVY PIECES OF JUNK YOU'VE BEEN FLYING. THIS IS AN ARMY PLANE AND ONE OF THEIR BEST.

... CARRY THREE PEOPLE AS CREW. WHY? I DON'T KNOW. THEY NORMALLY ONLY CARRY TWO, BUT ALL THREE OF YOU WILL FIT IN.

NOW THIS PARTICULAR TYPE 100 HAS BEEN MODIFIED TO ...

YEAH, BUT IT'S A *GREAT* PLANE!

THOSE ARMY TYPES ARE WEIRD.

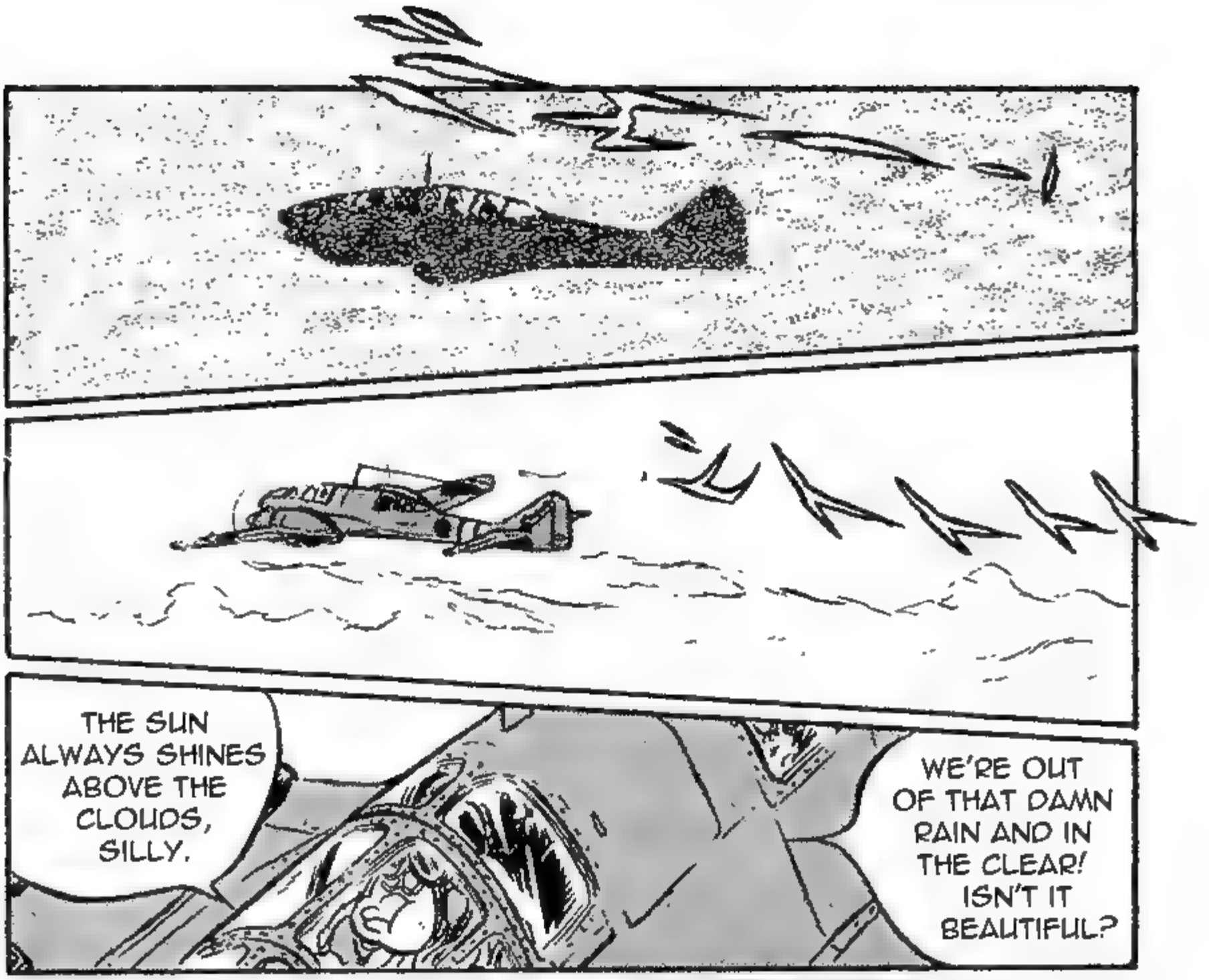
I DIDN'T TELL THEM, JUST AS YOU ASKED.

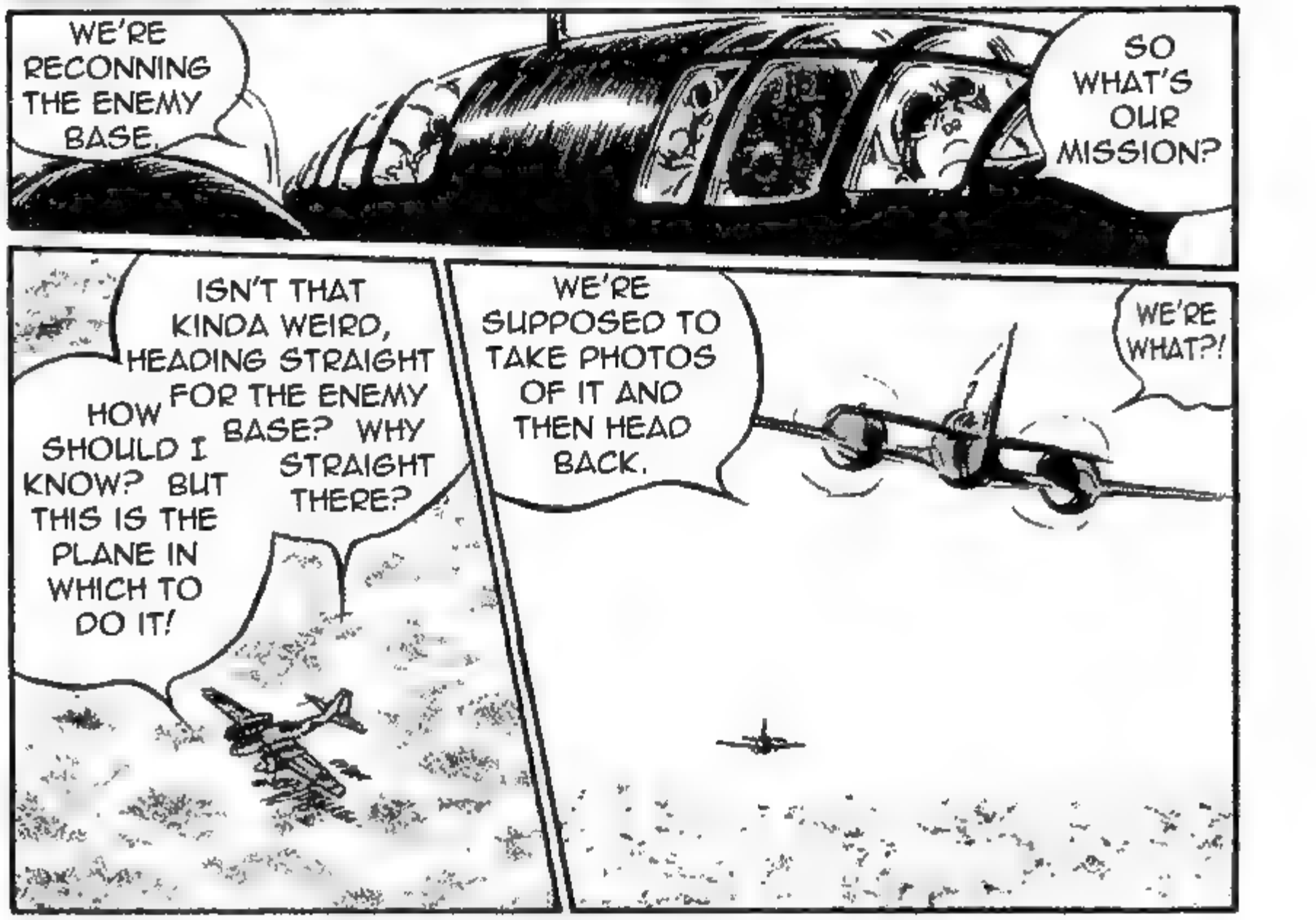
GOOD! I WISH WE COULD SAVE THE PLANE, BUT I'M DOING US BOTH A FAVOR THIS WAY.

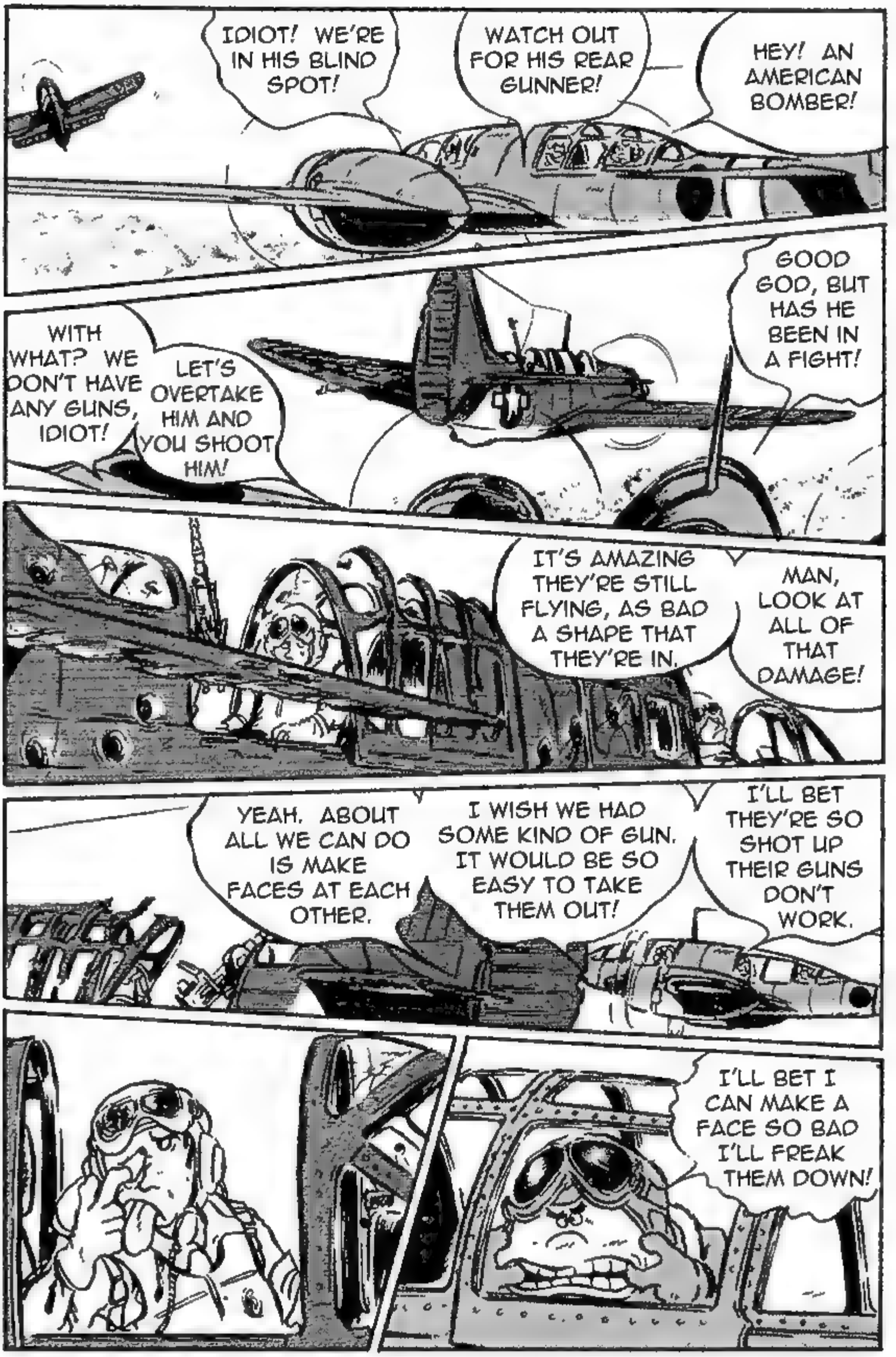
GOODBYE, MY TYPE 100! I'M SORRY TO DO THIS TO YOU ....

WE'RE ABANDONING THIS BASE! I DON'T WANT ANYTHING LEFT BEHIND! IF YOU CAN'T LOAD IT UP THEN RIG CHARGES AND BLOW IT UP WHEN WE LEAVE!

ALL RIGHT! LET'S LOAD EVERYTHING UP! WE'RE PULLING OUT!


THE SUN ALWAYS SHINES ABOVE THE CLOUDS, SILLY.
WE'RE OUT OF THAT DAMN RAIN AND IN THE CLEAR! ISN'T IT BEAUTIFUL?


WE'RE RECONNING THE ENEMY BASE.
SO WHAT'S OUR MISSION?
ISN'T THAT KINDA WEIRD, HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THE ENEMY BASE? WHY STRAIGHT THERE?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW? BUT THIS IS THE PLANE IN WHICH TO DO IT!
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO TAKE PHOTOS OF IT AND THEN HEAD BACK.
WE'RE WHAT?!


IDIOT! WE'RE IN HIS BLIND SPOT!
WATCH OUT FOR HIS REAR GUNNER!
HEY! AN AMERICAN BOMBER!
GOOD GOD, BUT HAS HE BEEN IN A FIGHT!
WITH WHAT? WE DON'T HAVE ANY GUNS, IDIOT!
LET'S OVERTAKE HIM AND YOU SHOOT HIM!
IT'S AMAZING THEY'RE STILL FLYING, AS BAD A SHAPE THAT THEY'RE IN.
MAN, LOOK AT ALL OF THAT DAMAGE!
YEAH. ABOUT ALL WE CAN DO IS MAKE FACES AT EACH OTHER.
I WISH WE HAD SOME KIND OF GUN. IT WOULD BE SO EASY TO TAKE THEM OUT!
I'LL BET THEY'RE SO SHOT UP THEIR GUNS DON'T WORK.
I'LL BET I CAN MAKE A FACE SO BAD I'LL FREAK THEM DOWN!

PBBBLT!!
OKAY, A POKER FACE ....
I'M SORRY. I CAN'T DO IT. MY FACE IS TIRED AND HE CAN MATCH ME FACE FOR FACE.
WHAT'S WRONG? DID YOUR FACE LOCK UP OR SOMETHING?

AAHHH ...
THAT LITTLE FACE-MAKING CONTEST OF YOURS MUST HAVE USED UP WHAT LITTLE ENERGY THEY HAD LEFT.
LOOKS LIKE YOU MANAGED TO "FREAK" THEM DOWN AFTER ALL.
OH NO! THEY'RE GOING TO CRASH!
WHAT'S WRONG?
HEY ... THE ELEVATORS ARE SLUGGISH.
I THINK THAT'S THE STRANGEST THING I'VE YET SEEN IN THIS WAR.
WHATEVER IT IS, IT OCCASIONALLY MESSES WITH THE CONTROL CABLES BACK THERE. A SMALL ANIMAL?
I DON'T KNOW. IT'S LIKE SOMETHING CAME LOOSE INSIDE THE TAIL BOOM AND IS MOVING AROUND.
ALREADY ON IT! YEAH, IT LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF ANIMAL, ONLY IT'S BIG ... ... OH SHIT ... !
SHIMAI CAN YOU SEE WHAT IT IS?

IT'S THE GIRL WITH THE GUN!

WHAT IS IT?

AHH, UHH ... HI.

EITHER SHE ESCAPED OR THE COLONEL PUT HER IN HERE.

HOW'D SHE GET IN HERE?

IT'S THE REPORTER! BUT ISN'T SHE A PRISONER BACK AT THE BASE?!

HEY! MY UNIFORM! YOU LOOK BETTER NAKED LADY!

BUT WHY WOULD HE WANT TO DO THAT, GIVEN THAT WE HAD THIS SPECIAL MISSION TO THE AMERICAN ....

HEY! WHO'S FLYING THE PLANE?!

WOW! SHE REALLY IS NAKED! MM-MH!!

I WANNA SEE, SHIMAI!

GOD, I'M FREEZING AGAIN! I'M GONNA DIE, JUST LIKE LAST TIME!

SHE'S NAKED? I GOTTA SEE THIS!

IT'S THE AMERICAN AIR BASE! WE'VE REACHED IT! THEY CAN SEE US! SHIT, SHIT, SHIT!
HEY!!!
OH HELL!
THEY'RE SCRAMBLING EVERY PLANE THEY HAVE TO COME GET US!
COOL IT, SHIMAI. WE'VE GOT AN EVEN BIGGER PROBLEM.
FUCK, LADY, IS THAT ANY WAY TO TREAT YOUR FREE RIDE?!?!

GUYS, I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THIS. I'D BET THAT WOMAN'S PANTIES IF SHE HAD ANY THAT THE BASE ISN'T THERE ANYMORE. THAT'S WHY WE WERE GIVEN THIS PLANE ...

SO DO WE GO BACK TO THE BASE AND LEAD THEM THERE, OR DO WE HEAD OFF SOMEWHERE ELSE? LIKE THE HIMALAYAS AGAIN.

... AND HE DEFINITELY DIDN'T WANT TO DEAL WITH US ANYMORE.

... AND SHE WAS PUT ON BOARD. THEY COULDN'T SAVE THE PLANE, THE COLONEL DIDN'T WANT A PRISONER ON THE ROAD ...

YEP. YOU GOT IT OUR POOCHES ARE MOST DEFINITELY SCREWED ONCE OUR FUEL RUNS OUT.

SO HE SENT ALL OF US OFF TO THE AMERICANS. FUCKIN "A."

IS THERE ANYTHING BACK THERE FOR POOR SHIMAI? A BLANKET, ANYTHING? IT'S GONNA GET A LOT COLDER SOON.

I VOTE FOR THE HIMALAYAS. AT LEAST IT'LL BEAT A P.O.W. CAMP.

THANKS FOR YOUR COAT. GOD, BUT AREN'T THE STARS BEAUTIFUL ....

A YEAR FULL OF SUNNY WEATHER

ENDE

<Published in Big Comic Original, June 20, 1975 issue>

MANDELISMS

And so we come to the end of the fifth volume in *The Cockpit* series with a tale that seems like it's going to be another variation on a "Rufus-Doofus-Goofus" type war comedy but takes that wild *Twilight Zone* like twist at the end. That's probably going to be the best one line description you can give this particular tale. No deep themes, no self-searching, no portraits of wartime nobility or quiet commentaries on wartime cruelty. If there's any Matsumoto undercurrent in this tale at all, I guess it's what the unnamed Japanese colonel commanding the air base around which most of this story revolves does concering his three resident idiots in a face of a forced evacuation, not to mention the unintended prisoner-of-war he picks up along the way thanks to them. Setting the lot up to be shot down and killed by the Americans is cruel and a bit twisted, and it's very fortunate in the woman's case that she manages to escape the way she does. Consider this, though, before you being sharpening your criticism knives. Her fate as a Japanese prisoner-of-war would have been far worse. Plenty of wartime examples there to ponder.

This story is set against the backdrop of the Japanese failure to invade India from Burma in March of 1944. The island on which the fictional Japanese airbase in this tale is located is part of the Amadan Islands in the Bay of Bengal between India and Burma. The Japanese loss at the Battle of Imphal stopped their invasion attempt and forced them to retreat all the way back to their bases in western Burma from which it started. The evacation of the air base as depicted in this tale is part of that retreat.

Speaking of the woman, it's time to update our count on how women fare as a whole in *The Cockpit*. The unnamed female Associated Press reporter in this tale fortunately ends up in the "lives" column, although she goes through quite an ordeal along the way during which she gets naked twice but fortunately nothing else happens ... at least nothing that Matsumoto depicts in this tale. I know the feminists will have something to say about what she goes through in this story but I'm still going to count her in the "lives" column given that she survived the events in this tale and was actually returned to her side, albeit under unusual circumstances (smile). Let's see, what about the rest of this volume? No women in "Impact Angle 90 Degrees," consensual sex in "Shiden," all of the Japanese actresses in "Black Widow: The Demon Machine" get assaulted and some may have even engaged in sex (consensual or not) so that's half-a-dozen or so added to the "assaulted" column, the young Japanese woman doomed to a forced marriage in "Maneuvering Below 10,000 Meters" commits suicide, Herbert's fiance Hannah gets incinerated in the bombing of her home in "Firefles on the Elbe" and we should probably throw in the similar death of Reidel's girlfrend as well (she died in the firebombing of Dresden), and finally the unnamed female reporter in this tale survives her ordeal. For this volume alone that's 3-2-6 and we'll add that to the 6-3-1 from the other four volumes so far for a current grand running total of 9-5-7. That's nine women killed, five survive, and seven are assaulted or molested in some way during their tales. As before, I'll continue to keep this tally going as our trip through *The Cockpit* continues.

Impact angle 90 degrees Battlefield Manga Series 5

Shonen Sunday Comics

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